THE AWAKENING

HENRY BORDEAUX

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THE AWAKENING

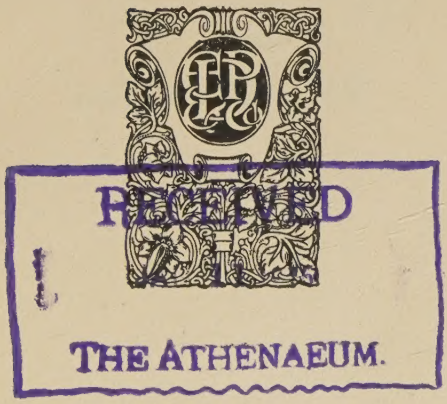
BY

HENRY BORDEAUX

Author of "The Fear of Living"

TRANSLATED BY

RUTH HELEN DAVIS



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TO

MY DEAR AUNT VIRGINIA

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE REGARD

OF

RUTH HELEN DAVIS

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THE AWAKENING

PART I

I

THE FIRST ACT OF PROCEDURE

A suit for divorce or separation is begun, as everyone knows, by a petition to the presiding judge: the party seeking freedom or release from the conjugal tie briefly states his grievances, and requests the magistrate, according to law, to attempt a reconciliation, a useless proceeding in most cases, before the final break. In the provinces, the first step in the proceedings is generally heartily welcomed in the solicitors' offices. The clerks hastily leave their desks to get a look at the rough draft — which they will soon have to copy — with all the eagerness of youth to enjoy a scandal, the participants in which are known to them. It is a regular treat for them; but their unkindness is quite devoid of malice.

Thus, the Derize case at Grenoble brought

into close conference in M. Tabourin's office, during the chief's absence, the four clerks — the learned Vitrolle, Dauras, Lestaque and the errand-boy Malaunay. They began the reading of a communication from the veteran barrister, M. Salvage with the formality commensurate with the importance of the persons concerned, and with a sense of the glory reflected upon the office by such a truly Parisian affair.

"Another victim of man's selfishness!" cried Vitrolle with an air of finality.

The head clerk was chivalrous, a feminist, and imbued with a local patriotism stimulated by the scholarly learning of an archivist. Had he not discovered from statistics — into what will statistics not inquire? — that "the number of deceived husbands is less in Dauphiné than anywhere else," this being an opinion which an old author named Chateaumières de Grenaille had formulated as early as the 16th century, stating that it was "almost a miracle to hear of a woman in Grenoble having a love-affair to the damage or prejudice of her reputation." Nothing less than this learned authority could have induced him to side against M. Derize, whose almost universal reputation as an historian would otherwise have had great weight with him.

"Pooh, let's wait for the answer," protested young Malaunay, who, at the age of seventeen or

eighteen, after having gone through many offices, was profoundly skeptical in all matters of morals.

But his doubts were not shared by his three colleagues, for they had seen the pretty, quiet Madame Derize in the street, in the public garden, on the quays of the Isère, and they earnestly and unanimously vouched for the innocence of their new client.

"I hope you're right, I'm sure," said the office boy indifferently. "All the same I had anticipated this case."

He gave this retrospective prophecy with the air of one who knows life not merely from legal document, but from every angle of personal observation.

"What do you mean?" asked Dauras and Lestaque, who had but one thought in common.

"Well, one day at the museum —"

"What were you doing at the museum?"

"Copying a deed, perhaps — one day at the museum, M. Derize was showing his wife the pictures. I was behind them — they had stopped in front of the portrait of an old man, all wrinkled, who, at first glance, looked very ugly to me."

"Who was the artist?" asked Vitrolle, before risking an opinion.

"I don't know — it's all the same to me."

"You have no taste."

"He was saying, 'Look at that face; see how

it sums up the whole of peasant life with its daily struggles, its sorrows, its parsimony indelibly written in the wrinkles, its dreams — and perhaps a little alcohol too — in the glassy eye.' He spoke excitedly, and said a lot of other things that I've forgotten. I profited by his lessons. But Madame Derize did not stir any more than a post. She certainly is beautiful, but I find her too impassive. Really, I thought the old man quite alive, instead of just a portrait in a frame hanging on the wall."

"What then?"

"Listen. To the right of the old man there was a picture of a lady in a low cut dress. A red dress with all kinds of dangles on the sleeves and bodice. Mme. Derize took in the costume at a glance, you understand; she said: 'Lace looks very well with velvet.' Her husband was furious and did not say another word while they were in the gallery."

"And after that?" said Vitrolle.

"After that? Nothing. Divorce, that's all."

His hearers burst into insolent laughter which vexed Malaunay, for he was proud of his keen insight and exceedingly sensitive. This discussion of art bored the scribblers who had expected a more risqué story. The entrance of the chief put an end to their conference.

Without being old, M. Tabourin appeared so,

because he was untidy and looked as if he were covered with the dust of his folios. He had often envied the baldness of most of his colleagues, when hurriedly running a comb through his over-abundant hair, for it remained rumpled like poor soil which closes up again after being plowed. He was absorbed in the duties of his office and gave no thought to the fit of his clothing, which hung loosely on his body and twisted itself into wrinkles with every movement. Business had such a fascination for him that he never confused it with the human tragedies hidden beneath it: he considered his cases as distinct persons in themselves, living and important, each one lodging in a folio, so that he did not need occupy himself with the repetition of decisions and of the procedure in compromised or ruined homes. Professionals are nearly all so constituted, and that is why their professions do not wear them out.

"Anything new?" he asked the head clerk. Vitrolle handed him the draft.

"The Derize Petition."

"Ah! Ah!"

This news brought out in M. Tabourin's dull face lines of cupidity, as the light shining in a badly aired room gathers together a group of atoms and invites them to dance. He drew nearer to the window to decipher Salvage's cramped writing. The clerks watched him curi-

ously, with the exception of Malaunay, who was waiting for a good opportunity to leave. The lovely June sun was calling him to come out and walk.

M. Tabourin's law-office is situated in St. André's Square, on the first floor, opposite the court house. It is reached through a dark, dirty corridor at the end of which is an open staircase: for entrance-halls, which are the pride of Paris and frequently of foreign cities as well, are generally sacrificed in the provincial towns of France, so that even large, commodious, roomy apartments with high ceilings, have the most wretched approaches.

As Grenette Square was formerly the business center of Grenoble,— still is in fact,— so St. André's Square was the real heart of the town, since there the religious, the municipal and the judicial life met, and even now are represented by their monuments. The past of Dauphiné dwells there, but one has to search a while to find it, for in this capital of long ago, the old is everywhere hidden beneath the new. As you alight at the station, you see only newly-built districts, houses scarcely finished, and wide avenues, whose perspective terminates in the far-away mountains. An industrious and prosperous town, you conclude, born yesterday in noble surroundings and lacking historic coloring. Even the streets have been re-

named; the old " Rue des Jésuites," where Stendhal was born, is now called " Jean Jacques Rousseau." A few fortified gates opened in the ramparts have been ruthlessly dismantled, but those still standing interest the pedestrian, who, little by little, by following the winding paths of L'Ile Verte, finds traces of the wall of enclosure, perceives the bastions against the sides of Mont Rachois, imagines from these evidences of defensive toil the battles of old, and is prepared to discover by chance somewhere in the bright city one or other of those expressions of the spirit of a race which has maintained its integrity with a tenacity that has resisted all the labors of architects and engineers. Saint André's Square should still be satisfying, but it is only half so. There at the western end is the tall tower of the town hall which was once the palace of the Constable de Lesdiguières, and there above the low houses which crowd about it and hide its door, is the church whose venerable octagonal stone steeple is wrought with double windows in a pointed arch. But the court house where the Parliament of Dauphiné sat, shows a façade half Gothic, half Renaissance, the materials of which have been scratched away here, replaced there, and still retain even in the sunlight that cold newness which only the touch of time melts. As to the statue of Bayard, — who is represented as dying against the trunk

of a tree,— it only encumbers the narrow square without adorning it.

M. Tabourin had never noticed many monuments from his window. From the time of moving into these offices he had taken pleasure only in the nearness of the court house — which he particularly appreciated when troubled by rheumatism. The brief of a case requiring special knowledge; seizure, dispossession, "the whole gamut," as he said enthusiastically, and involving heavy charges, when handed to him in its light blue envelope was much more attractive than the past of the province with all its memories. So he read the lawyer's petition without sentimental curiosity, and remarked only that Mme. Derize intended to apply for a separation *de plano,* that is, without preliminary investigation, which would reduce the fee.

"Have you had the corroborative evidence?" he inquired.

"No, sir."

"Was there something about a letter?"

"That is probably being kept back until after the usual attempt at reconciliation."

"Good. You will have the papers drawn up, Vitrolle, at once."

He took it for granted that the existence of a case dates only from the issue of its papers. Then he went into his private office and arranged

one by one on the table the documents which he thought he would need for the hearing of the court that opened at nine o'clock. During this mechanical work, his inner contentment made him smile. All Grenoble had been watching this Derize case for two months, since Mme. Derize (née Molay-Norrois), had left Paris and had come to live with her parents. For the first few weeks there had been a pretense of ignorance of the subject; then, some over-gossipy friends felt a desire to provide explanations: M. Derize was traveling to authenticate the sources of some historical work; he had been unable to take his wife and children with him, but was coming back to spend his holidays at Uriage as usual. Little by little another version was given out. Some well-informed persons predicted a divorce. "Would it be tried in Grenoble or in Paris?" the lawyers were asking one another. The question was now settled for M. Tabourin: he was to represent the more sympathetic side in a trial, from which he would derive small remuneration, no doubt, but the widest publicity because of the personality of Albert Derize, the well-known historian, and of the prominent position of the Molay-Norrois family. Thoroughly pleased, he opened the door leading to his private apartments to inform Mme. Tabourin, who was grateful for this fresh bit of news which would supply her with

conversation for an entire day. And this act of consideration for his wife seemed to him definitely to establish the case, even before the proceedings were officially begun.

On his return, he found M. Lagier waiting for him in the office. Philippe Lagier, although still under forty, was considered, in civil proceedings, to be one of the most capable lawyers in Grenoble. Short, sickly, with a faded complexion, delicate features, his hair already growing gray, indolent in appearance, nevertheless at the bar he was the equal of the strongest. Highstrung and tense, he was tireless in public, never telling of his lonely hours of depression. His colleagues recognized his capacity for work, the modern ideas by which he simplified old methods, suppressed flowery phrases, gestures and digressions, shortened, condensed and clarified the form of pleading until it seemed like pronouncing final sentence; but people in general disliked him for the impertinence of his conversation, which was emphasized by a monocle without a cord, screwed into his eye. They disliked him too for his exaggerated contempt for professional matters and his almost fanatical fondness for the plastic arts, to which he devoted all his spare time, and for the gratification of his interest in which he went to the museums of Italy and Flanders as soon as vacation began, to collect the pictures, drawings and engravings that filled

his room. And all this, to the great astonishment of the specialists, did not lessen his clientèle. He was known to be the intimate friend and college chum of Albert Derize, who would no doubt place his interests in Lagier's hands.

M. Tabourin, bristling, with his heart in his mouth, rushed forward:

"Good morning, Chief."

He was willing to flatter those who could help him in his work. Philippe Lagier in accordance with his method, went straight to the point:

"I have just met my colleague, Salvage. He has sent you the Derize petition: — although the parties are really residents of Paris, we have agreed to ask for the recognition of the Grenoble court."

"Thank you," said the lawyer, as if they had taken this step for his especial benefit, rather than, as was the case, to avoid the publicity of the newspapers.

Lagier screwed the monocle into his eye to mark the importance of this reply. It was a joke which he would add to his court anecdotes.

"Will you show me the rough draft?"

"It is being copied."

"I have serious reasons for wishing to see it. It is not a matter of inquisitiveness, since it will be placed in my client's hands to-morrow — I have informed M. Salvage about it."

"Vitrolle, give me the petition."

A man of importance and of so much authority must be handled tactfully. The head clerk got up and brought the paper to M. Lagier, whom M. Tabourin had taken into his private room. The lawyer was immediately absorbed in the document, which read as follows: —

"To the President of the First County Court of Grenoble: Mme. Albert Derize, née Elizabeth Molay-Norrois, domiciled at No. 9 Rue Bara, Paris, the wife of M. Albert Derize with whom she resides in law, but is in reality living at the Quai de la Republique, Grenoble, at the home of her parents, M. and Mme. Molay-Norrois, has the honor to inform you:

"That she contracted a marriage on the 25th day of May, 1897, with M. Albert Derize, formerly an officer of the municipality of Grenoble;

"That two children were the issue of this marriage, Marie Louise, born on the 10th of June, 1898; and Philippe, on the 18th of January, 1901;

"That on the 6th of last April, the plaintiff, previously authorized by her husband to open in his absence all telegrams and telegraphed letters addressed to him, was thus compelled to take notice of a letter of this sort sent to M. Derize by Mlle. A. de S——; that this letter, as much by the words themselves, as by allusions to occurrences and a previous correspondence, contained the manifest

proof of the existence of a liaison between the two correspondents;

"That M. Derize, upon being asked to give explanations, immediately confessed his guilty passion, and by his offensive attitude forced his wife to leave their home with her children and to go to her parents' home at Grenoble;

"That since that time, after a trip to Germany with his mistress, he has established himself in Paris in her neighborhood and continues to maintain his relations with her;

"That under these circumstances the plaintiff has determined to take steps to procure a separation from her husband: — with these grounds the plaintiff concludes, etc., etc."

The legal forms for the interview of reconciliation followed and the date June, 1905, with the day left blank.

Philippe Lagier did not see his cases in the same light as his host, M. Tabourin, who thought only of formulas and remuneration. Lagier, prompted by intellectual curiosity rather than by sympathy, was interested in knowing the underlying details; the human conflicts that they represented interested him, without changing his skepticism, which was the combined result of fundamental indifference, many dislikes, and the innate revolt of a disillusioned mind, cognizant of

its own value, but unable to put it to its best use. He rose. Through the half-opened door, he saw the attorney assigning work to his assistants, and at intervals reassuring two embarrassed peasants, whom he was about to dispossess. Seated uncomfortably on a bench in the office, they seemed to be so impressed by his affable manners and his poor clothes that they hesitated to give full vent to their complaints and lamentations.

What was the good of disturbing him in his ant-like activity? Lagier went towards the window, resolved to await him patiently. At the approach of a group of litigants, who had reached the court house before the doors were opened, two pigeons who were pecking in the sunny square, flew away and perched on the trefoil of the pointed arches ornamenting the belfry of Saint André. The over-restored monument opposite him reminded Lagier of Albert Derize's vehement invectives against architects; and, reading between the lines of the technical, obsolete expressions of the petition, he recalled the three actors of the drama which was soon to reach its conclusion before the amused magistrates. By a singular coincidence, all three had been factors of varying influence in his life.

Albert Derize was a college friend whom Lagier had chosen with that unerring instinct of youth, which, in later years, gives way to self-conscious-

ness and hesitation. How brilliant was his career at the early age of thirty-nine! After graduating from the Charter School, he had gone to the Arsenal for a short time as assistant librarian. Faithful to his province while away, he had published a history of Lesdiguières, king of the mountains, in which the hard and cunning rogue of the 16th century stood out like the hero of a novel, and also a History of the Assembly at Vizille in 1789, which set forth in brief the spiritual and material conditions in Dauphiné on the eve of the Revolution. From that time fortune smiled on him. Despite his youth, the Academy awarded him the Grand Prix Gobert. A publisher, impressed by his self-confidence and success placed him at the head of a publishing enterprise in which he had long been stimulating interest in the best literary circles: — a monthly collection of biographies of great men, short, clear, eloquent and accurate and very cheap; by means of which he hoped to rouse young men from their apathy and to incite them by example to a more profitable use of their time. With that versatility of mind which is attracted by every great realization of life, Derize reserved for himself the treatment of some of the more pathetic and inspiring life stories, such as Pascal, Lavoisier, Marceau and Beethoven. In spite of this work, he continued to labor from year to year with tireless activity,

on his "History of the Workman in Modern Life," in six volumes, a splendid treatise on the development of unions, of machinery, of manual labor and of economic and moral conditions. He was also writing a "History of the Peasant in the 19th Century" in which he gave free rein to his love of the soil, of agricultural labor and of country life, inherited from a line of husbandmen ancestors, and in which he showed by the reconstruction of vanished communities, both French and foreign, and by comparison with new social units, the inspiriting force of inheritance and of family ties. This work was to consist of four volumes: the second had just appeared. Le Play, Fustel de Coulanges or Taine, would have welcomed with joy this disciple, who was already a master, because of his positive method, his erudition, his regard for facts, and Taine, the greatest artist of the three, would have rejoiced in the warmth of his style and the coloring of his pictures.

In reconsidering his friend's successful career, Philippe Lagier, with the usual outcome of such dreams, began to think of his own achievements and concluded:

"He had luck. After all I am as able as he."

His friendship, although deep and of long standing, was not quite free from envy. He had deplored his narrow horizon and limited environ-

ment too often not to be envious of the freer, broader existence that Albert Derize enjoyed. He was his friend's equal in intellectual penetration, and was much quicker to perceive the ironical side of situations and characters, and to accept them at once at their true valuation. Because of the unexpected scope Derize gave to all subjects and observations, the contagious love of life which he spread about him, the inner flame which at all times flashed from his eyes, how indisputably did he relegate Lagier to the second place! And when one expected his enthusiasm to lead him into an error, an exaggeration or a false statement, he would right himself again as a careening boat with its sails too taut, by a skillful turn of the rudder, swings into its right course. A well-balanced mind and a passionate heart, one had to recognize him as a rare force with the power to enliven the hours by his presence, as his books animated them for his readers.

Philippe Lagier was interrupted in his impartial comparison by the entrance of M. Tabourin.

" I will be with you immediately, Chief. These people who were dispossessed were trying to retain their land."

He was referring to the peasants in their blue blouses and he disappeared again to argue with them.

Philippe remembered his unpleasant surprise

when he had heard of the engagement of Albert and Elizabeth Molay-Norrois. He himself, at that time, was hesitating about asking for the hand of the young girl of nineteen, whom he thought too young, too worldly, judging her by her clothes; too conventionally pretty with her pastel complexion, her wondering eyes and that well-rounded form giving promise of developing into too stout a woman. He counted upon time to dispel his indecision, and had then been suddenly obliged to quit the field — which is always difficult. He had, however, quickly dismissed this sentimental dream, and had even been able to propose a toast on the wedding day, when with the usual commonplaces, he made a speech to the young couple who were "made for each other." Was not that reality outdone? This young man, already famous, whom the Molay-Norrois had been proud to welcome, despite the inferiority of his family, took with him to Paris a wife who was worthy of him and would help him in his easy ascent to success.

Why had not Lagier come first? Richer, of better family, a resident of Grenoble, what advantages he had to offer! He was constantly invited to the house. And Albert had come one fine day quite by chance. Fate willed it that Albert should always outstrip him. The petition for separation which carried his thoughts back,

had revived his forgotten ill-will. He was tempted to rejoice at this misfortune, evidence of which would be filed on the following day. But then, less indulgent toward his own faults, he soon began a self-analysis.

"Am I going to betray him instead of defending him? Now, just what has happened? In the first days of their married life, I realized that Albert was not perfectly happy. Young girls are all too silly then to make men happy. In spite of our intimacy he never made the least allusion to any unpleasantness, but I guessed it — without regret. Yes, without regret: a man is not perfect. Then their horizon cleared. Observing the somewhat impersonal but delicate protection with which he surrounded his young wife, I gave no more thought to their happiness, and consented to be god-father to their second child —"

Irritated by these memories he opened the door and witnessed the departure of the two peasants, who were bowing to M. Tabourin, crushing their hats in their hands and thanking him again and again. For what were they thanking him? For having put them out of their homes? This devil of a man, not content with dispossessing them, exacted their gratitude for doing so!

"They quite understood," said the lawyer, as he came back.

"Understood what?"

"That I have only their interests at heart."

Philippe Lagier thought this was intended for a cynical pun, but in his office M. Tabourin always spoke seriously.

"Evidently!" he replied. "Here is your petition."

"Thank you. The case will go through quickly. Are you going to defend it?"

"Wait. In the first place the specifications of residence must be modified. M. Salvage and I are willing to accept the recognition of the Grenoble Court in order to avoid any comments in Paris, but to make this change seem plausible, put M. Derize down as living at St. Martin d'Uriage, where he owns an estate which comes under this jurisdiction."

"Certainly, certainly," acquiesced the lawyer, reaching out his hand for the document.

"And then —"

But some new clients interrupted the conversation, and as they were of importance, M. Tabourin, hesitating, assumed a distressed expression. Philippe Lagier, generally so impatient, was sorry for him. He closed the door between the two rooms in order to enjoy undisturbed the tête-à-tête with the third person in the drama. Over the compromising initials in the petition, he wrote the whole name: "Anne de Sézery." And he brought before him in a vision the young

girl with brown hair, the shade of chestnuts that fall before the harvest, a face one could never forget, partly because of the disillusioned expression about the mouth in direct contrast to the bloom of her clear cheeks, and especially attractive because of the long narrow eyes flashing golden sparks, whose warm desires seemed to contradict the premature languor of her bearing. Slender, well-formed and strong, she gave the impression of having been born tired, as if she thought it useless to pursue too great aims. She lived with her father in a family château at Saint Ismier, a village built on the slope overlooking the wide valley of Grésivaudan. Her independent manners, her self-possession on horseback, her conversation which betrayed a wide and catholic taste in reading, and an almost mystical enthusiasm for secular subjects, these with her fortune, not big, but apparently comfortable, gave her a motley following of young men — of whom he had been one. For a long time he had been desperately in love with her: she singled him out for the intellectual qualities which delighted in stripping the world of its false poetry — and sometimes of its true poetry as well — and still he could not believe himself the favored one. Who could dare to believe himself favored? He had loved her in his own fashion, which implied reserve and caution, but had it come to a question of marrying her, he would

have raised a thousand objections. But at that time such an obscure person would not have contented her, and, later, would he still have cared?

Albert Derize, whom he sometimes took with him on his visits, had become absorbed in the study of some ancient title-deeds at the château, where he found documents for his reconstruction of old Dauphiné. When Albert took part in the conversation, he treated the girl's audacities and paradoxes with the candor and loyalty of a comrade to whom one does not feel bound to show any particular consideration. "He was already thinking of little Elizabeth Molay whom he had met in the street and did not know," thought Philippe. "It was he who mentioned her to me and called my attention to her."

On the death of her father, Anne de Sézery, entirely unprepared for it, found herself heiress of a ruined estate. The old man with senile cunning, had for a long time concealed the fact, presenting to the world a bold front, like a crumbling castle, with riddled walls and undermined foundations. The suitors gone, the château sold, the creditors almost entirely paid, she disappeared. In her pride she had told no one of her intention. It was rumored that she was earning her living in England by giving lessons in music and literature in an aristocratic boarding-school. Little by little she ceased to be mentioned. She had never

returned to her native country. Ten years had passed. Was it really ten years? And if it were ten years, how could he recall so distinctly that disquieting face, at once so sad and so passionate? She must be thirty-two or thirty-three now. And here she was reëntering his life with all the serenity of the impressions of youth, sure of her power to enchant.

This strange phantom had chosen his best friend as a means to recall herself to his memory. How had Albert Derize found her again? By what sudden turn of things had he come at last to understand this strange combination of ardor and despondency? She had made herself remembered by the passion she inspired. Had not her golden eyes in those days demanded absolute love, love given without thought of sorrow, or of fear of risk? Among these green box-files, arranged methodically like the limited sentiments of civilized lives, Philippe Lagier, disgusted with his fate, longed for the inexorable happiness she offered.

He had the proof of this happiness with him. With a mechanical movement he took from his pocketbook the two letters and the telegram which he had received from his friend since the separation. They were two short notes, expressing no regret; but then, for regret Albert was too proud. In the first, Albert entrusted him with his defense,

in case divorce proceedings were instituted; in the second, he begged him to keep Anne de Sézery's name out of the trial, and to offer in exchange a complete submission to all Mme. Derize's demands as to the custody of the children. By a strange contradiction he had subordinated all his family ties to this new passion, and wished to keep quiet the name of the girl whom he did not wish to compromise, because he had no intention of marrying her: it seemed as if he had decided henceforth to live without the pale of law and society. That very morning, informed of the difficulties which would attend his proposition, he had wired that he would arrive with the evening express, and gave his mother's address on the Boulevard des Adieux.

Such were the three actors. To reconstruct the drama, it would perhaps suffice to read the evidence alluded to in the petition. When M. Tabourin reappeared, Philippe, whose imagination was over-stimulated, demanded:

"What about the letter in question?"

"I have not received it. It will be sent to you at the proper time."

"Good. Now may I give you a message I have for you?"

"I am at your service."

"Do you want to add to the scandal?"

"What scandal?"

"There is a third person mixed up in this affair."

"Nobody knows her. I do not even know her name myself."

"You are wrong. To-morrow that name will be on everybody's lips."

"So much the worse."

"Could we not, as is often done, agree upon another reason for separation? We will accept it in advance. We shall not try to defend."

"You know very well that the judge does not admit such an obvious disguise of mutual consent, and besides M. Salvage would not be a party to any deception."

"Suppose I saw Mme. Derize?"

"Her lawyer tells me she does not wish to concern herself about it on any account."

"Nevertheless I shall see her before the trial begins. Wait until to-morrow to draw up your petition. Do you agree?"

Maître Tabourin made a weak gesture of protest:

"You are unreasonable. The case must be begun."

"Well, well," replied Philippe, "it won't run away from you. But now it is time for the opening of court. Come with me, I want to talk to you about one or two other cases."

And they set out together for the court house.

As soon as they were gone, the clerks began to deliberate again:

"Did you notice M. Lagier's anxious face?" questioned Vitrolle.

The romantic Malaunay hazarded:

"He is in love with Mme. Derize and can't make up his mind to plead against her."

The two others protested:

"What do you know about it?"

"One always loves the wife of one's best friend." The office boy's psychology was pessimistic.

"For the time being he has set aside the petition," Vitrolle concluded.

"It will not come up again," said the little man.

"What do you bet?" cried Dauras and Lestaque in chorus.

And they made bets on the Derize separation, as if it were a horse race. Malaunay alone bet the husband would win.

So the inevitable chorus, with its laughter, accompanied the tragedy of three people, a tragedy which these men of law were about to record with the aid of a set formula and with the usual professional indifference.

II

THE FIRST JUDGES

The Molay-Norrois lived on the Quai de la République on the first floor of a spacious apartment, whose eight windows looked out on the Isère. Because of the rapidity of the current and the continual variation of volume, the water of this river, flowing from the glaciers of the great Aiguille Rousse, sometimes shallow and sometimes overflowing, is not clear, but is undoubtedly fresh and cold. Above the bridge is a narrow section of the right bank, backed by the ramps of Mont Rachais and dominated by the fortress and the Monastery of Sainte-Marie-d'En-Haut. The mountains of Vercors on the left and the Saint-Eynard on the right complete the outline of a fairly wide horizon. One feels surrounded by plenty of space and splendid air.

This apartment formed a part of the old house that Lesdiguières prepared for his mistress, Marie Vignon, who was the wife of a silk merchant: the husband, not taking kindly to this luxury, was assassinated, and his wife, who welcomed it gladly, was married somewhat later and installed

in the Constable's house. But as is the custom in Grenoble, the past has left no trace, and one would take the old house for new. This historical relic had attracted Albert Derize in former times, and so led him to meet Elizabeth Molay when she was still a child.

Philippe Lagier, who had called in the afternoon to fulfill his delicate mission to Mme. Derize in accordance with his promise to the lawyer, met M. Molay-Norrois coming downstairs.

"What a pleasant surprise! The visit of an enemy!" said the latter.

M. Molay-Norrois at sixty was by no means an old man. His scanty hair and beard à la Henry IV framed his ruddy face in white. Eyes of faded blue suggested a certain melancholy which belied his smile and the natural sprightliness of his expression and movements. He was dressed with care, a gray overcoat, gray high hat, patent leather shoes half hidden by fawn-colored spats, and from military habit — he had been a cavalry officer — he held himself very upright and rather stiff. He was slender and aristocratic-looking, and easily maintained an air of youth, of which he availed himself in the presence of women.

"I have not come as an enemy," said Philippe. "I want to arrange with your daughter to avoid this unhappy trial. You could help us."

"My daughter has gone out. The ladies

are both at Mme. Passerat's; it is her day at home."

Philippe Lagier, who was standing on a lower step, looked up at the speaker. The latter showed a gracious, pleasant face, as innocent as a child's. Had not his well-known liaison with the beautiful Mme. Passerat become respectable with time, and did he not know better than anyone what is correct in society and what is not?

"Perhaps the ladies would receive me some other day," began the lawyer —

"But if you will come with me," answered M. Molay-Norrois, "we will go together. It is only across the Isère."

"With pleasure —"

There was in fact only the Isère to cross. The Villa Passerat stands on the opposite bank, almost at the entrance to the stone bridge. It consists of a building with a wing at the right and a turret at the left. This little turret, seemingly so useless and of doubtful architecture, had nevertheless played its modest part as watch tower: they said that one of its windows, usually closed, stood ostentatiously open during the occasional absence of M. Passerat, who was president of a local Academy of Art and Letters and director of several industrial societies. From the Quai de la République there is a very good view of the Quai de France. The house, smart and new, though

in an old neighborhood, has a certain picturesqueness, due to its situation, but could have been greatly improved by being treated with more simplicity. It is ensconced, so to speak, in the rock which shelters it from the wind, and it is reached by a grated gate on the street level leading to a passage connecting with the outer buildings and the garage. The walls are covered with a wild vine. The terrace, overlooking the quay, is laid out as a garden, and from the entire façade, but more particularly from the upper stories (for some acacias planted at the edge of the river partially obstruct the view), one sees the magnificent panorama of the Dauphiné Alps, all the group of Belledonne and the Sept-Laux, snow-covered even in summer and glistening under the rays of the sun. On clear winter evenings when that snow, warmed by the glow of the sunset, takes on the color of almond flowers, this view charms the eye with more delicate shades than even Spring can offer.

At the bridge M. Molay-Norrois, stopping to open his sunshade, observed:

"Formerly when you married off your daughter, all responsibility ceased. Nowadays the children are constantly bringing their troubles into court, and parents have no rest."

"Yes," agreed Philippe, "nothing is permanent."

"Indissoluble marriage was considered the safeguard of the family. Even if there were some obstacles, it was respected. But good breeding is out of date. Democracy has destroyed it."

"Perhaps it is because we have less time to devote to it."

"That time was not wasted, young man."

Flattered by this designation, the lawyer was tempted to agree, but the old beau went on:

"Discretion, tact, ingenuity in living are all lost qualities. People cry from the housetops what ought to be kept quiet. You will see the paper that has been drawn up by your colleague, the austere Salvage, an old friend of my family. Ah, those old friends of ours, the lawyers, barristers, doctors, what a nuisance they are, my dear fellow! You have to consult them in the name of the venerable usages which they keep up, and they take advantage of it to ruin you, to drag you into law-suits, to crush you —"

"I saw the petition."

"Well, what do you think of it? The truth — they are all for the truth. As if truth is necessary to civilization: as if a highly organized society, eager for enjoyment, could get on without hypocrisy! And you take the whole world into your confidence. Formerly silence was a rule of good taste."

"Let us reconcile them."

"It is impossible. I went to Paris to see my son-in-law; he was off to Germany with the young woman. My sons Oliver and Victor wished to challenge him. It was foolish of them, but generous. I had great difficulty in restraining them. Would you have believed it? A scholar, an ambitious man to compromise his career and lose all chance of election to the Academy! One does not wreck one's home for such follies. He used to love Elizabeth: perhaps he still loves her. Who has not loved two women at the same time? But there you are, he is proud. When he was caught in an awkward situation, instead of denying, he defended himself. I know him: he will not come back. They call that showing character, whereas life is made up of concessions."

"And Mme. Derize?"

"The ladies are greatly wrought up. They excite each other: they talk about it all the time. Their patience, which I have kept alive for two months, is at an end."

"Then this is final?"

"I am afraid so."

They had reached the Passerat villa. Philippe did not care to go in.

"Could you not tell your daughter that I should like to see her? It is four o'clock. I shall come at about six."

"No, no, come in; — you can make your arrangements with her."

He did the honors of the house, as if he were at home. Madame Tabourin had not lost any time! There were seldom so many people at Madame Passerat's in the month of June, for then the heat seems to concentrate in the valleys, and people begin to leave town for their country places near by,— shady Uriage, or stations farther on. M. Passerat, whose only passion was archæology, presented to society the frightened manner of a library rat, disturbed while gnawing old books: but on Thursday afternoons, he had less difficulty in appearing sociable, as a matter of gratitude to those guests who took only a glass of syrup or a cup of tea and a small cake, while at the evening functions, being very niggardly despite his wealth, he calculated the expense of the refreshments and grumbled about it. Not only was he not master in his own house, but, on the pretext that his ideas were old-fashioned, he was no longer consulted about anything; whereas M. Molay-Norrois, with his taste for traditions modified by an exact sense of modern requirements, enjoyed an influence which had given rise to the story of the unfastened turret window. Gossip about the two had been even more general since Mme. Passerat, surrounded by her enemies had to struggle at the same time against her years —

forty-five in all — and a tendency to shrivel and grow thin, which, if it looked attractive with high-necked gowns, was most trying in evening dress. She was on a fattening diet, but missed the benefit of it because of her physical activity and her irritability of mind. She was a handsome brunette with a curved nose, a quick decisive manner and a loud voice. She loved to bestow pleasure after she had secured a goodly share for herself. Domineering and charitable, she treated life with an assumed frankness, which in reality she lacked, and her husband, naturally fussy, was carried away willy-nilly by these hussar tactics which paid no regard to his indecision.

The two new-comers found the room full. People had gathered around Mme. Derize, congratulating, kissing, flattering her, until she did not know to whom to listen, swamped by the chorus of " dear creature," " poor little thing "— " these monsters of men," to all of which she passively submitted. Neither her mother, who had scarcely left her since her trouble, nor she herself had any idea of their lawyer's breach of trust. The two women had come to call unsuspectingly.

" Society always considers the absent one to be in the wrong," Mme. Molay-Norrois had assured her daughter. " Preserve the dignity of your position, but be strong in your own right.

Mme. Passerat is very influential and she is our friend."

Mme. Molay-Norrois, with charm, straightforwardness and a devotion to her daughter so complete as to be an annoyance, was withal not in any sense far-sighted. Quite well preserved for her fifty years, and very modest in appearance, except for too much powder on her face, she combined, as often happens, a great deal of physical energy with an undeveloped personality. She could read a book twice within a few weeks without recognizing it. Very docile and amenable to the influence of the moment, she readily confused values, and so a social call seemed to her as important as a decision affecting the future of her children. For the time being, she was entirely taken up with Elizabeth's law-suit, which she raised to the importance of a battle, implying a touching confidence in her daughter's victory.

Somewhat astonished by the present social success, she could at least assist her daughter's triumph, and being very deferential to public opinion, she congratulated herself on having brought about this social acclaim. There was still justice in the world to laud the innocent and to brand the guilty. Transformed into a heroine, Mme. Derize blushed like a young girl. But women soon grow accustomed to ceremonies: this new importance was perhaps in keeping with divorce, just as

it is customary to hurry to the vestry after a marriage, and as one, with a sorrowful air, shakes hands with the relatives upon leaving the church after a funeral. She conformed to this unexpected situation as well as she could, and society approved of her quietness. The "dear child" did not complain, did not blame anyone. Her beauty spoke for her.

Rather tall, with a tendency to fullness of figure, which spoiled somewhat the graceful lines of her shoulder, of her bosom and of her hips, she was wearing a gown and a hat of dark violet, the fitness of the color being favorably commented upon as quite the proper thing for a woman, who, although not in mourning, has known care, sorrow and the cruelty of fate. Her small head was crowned with beautiful, silky blonde hair, naturally curly like a child's, but too tightly drawn back by the comb; her eyes were black, softened by the shade of her hair and contrasting with it, her nose well-shaped, somewhat thin and pointed, her complexion like that of an English woman, her features clear-cut, and with her appearance of good health, and passive virtue, she expressed nothing more than a contented, stunned youthfulness — contented with itself, and stunned by the unexpected complications of a life, which without doubt, she had expected to pass through peacefully, as over a flat

road in a comfortable carriage. At twenty-seven, Mme. Derize looked only twenty and always gave the impression of just beginning life.

It would certainly require great kindness or a determining influence on the part of Mme. Passerat to protect this young woman, who possessed all the physical blessings which are the envy of age and which form such an attraction to a certain type of men.

When they saw the pitiless monocle of Philippe Lagier, both Mme. Molay-Norrois and Mme. Derize experienced the same feeling of constraint, and quietly withdrew from the circle of their many voluble admirers. He tried to talk to the younger woman alone and finally succeeded, after countless attempts, just as she was leaving.

"An interview?" she replied to his request, in her high-pitched voice which so soon became annoying and seemed unsuited to serious conversation. "But you are not on our side."

"I have a message which I must give you."

"From whom?"

"From Albert."

"I no longer know him."

This was said in a hard peremptory tone.

"It concerns your children — their custody. Have you lost your confidence in me?"

She could not mistrust his intentions. Either from curiosity or because the past still had a

greater hold upon her than even she herself realized, she brusquely consented without further request on his part.

"Very well, in an hour you can find me at my mother's house, at my home —"

And her exit, with her mother as a diligent chaperon on one side, and on the other, her father, who had understood the necessity for giving her his public support, was an apotheosis befitting people of distinction.

This departure relieved the strain. Society, lavish with its compliments and flatteries, must occasionally forsake this state of exaggerated enthusiasm which is rather wearing to all concerned. But it is not for the purpose of regaining the truth. Society sees everything in a distorted fashion and manages so to confuse issues, that after completely justifying its victims to the world, it turns and rends them.

"Do they know her name?" inquired Mme. Bonnard-Basson timidly. She was a wealthy parvenu, whose money had been made in cement, and who was received in society for her wealth, her pleasant ways and her meekness.

"Whose name?"

"Why . . . the corespondent's."

"Anne de Sézery": everybody knew it — above all things everybody wished to appear to know it, for it is humiliating to receive informa-

tion rather than to give it. Somebody named her and everyone agreed with an understanding air. How should they judge her? The title of nobility made them hesitate for a second. Before anyone spoke, a mysterious thought-current, pointing in a definite direction was established. One or another of the women recalled the young girl, formerly proud and independent, who had considered herself beyond all conventions. She had not left a very sympathetic impression behind her. Penniless, reduced to the point of accepting a position as a teacher — yes, as a governess — almost a servant, there was no possible defense for her. She had lost her social position. They made her out to be an adventuress. Those who meet with great obstacles in life and must seek work and recommendations from others easily pass for such. They accused her of wild flirtations,— oh, of course, with the purpose of finding a husband. For she was furious at being an old maid; at thirty-four or thirty-five (they were generous with her) it becomes difficult to marry. This addition to the number of her years, hurled insultingly into the discussion by some unkind gossip, caught the attention of a large part of the company. But no one denied it.

"Thirty-one," corrected Philippe Lagier, simply. "That is adolescence nowadays."

He received several angry glances, and they

continued with the story of an English lord, an old rheumatic millionaire with whom she had traveled, but the narrator confused places and dates at will, did not cite her authorities, and depended on a vague suspicion. And during all this gossip, Philippe saw even more distinctly than on the evening before, the beautiful disillusioned face and the sad eyes in which flashed golden lights.

They consulted him as to the future.

"Could she marry him?" inquired, in one breath, Mmes. de Vimelle and Bonnard-Basson, who had become bosom friends since the busy husband of the latter had provided the remunerative position of director for the useless husband of the former.

"Who?"

"M. Albert Derize, of course."

"Madame Derize is merely seeking a separation," someone explained.

"Ah, yes; that is customary — an absurd custom," interjected a young feminist —"One ought to be able to begin life again."

"Many times?"

"As often as necessary."

A former Court Counselor, M. Prémereux, a permanent fixture at Mme. Passerat's receptions, hastened to display his learning:

"Nowadays a separation becomes a divorce after a certain lapse of time."

" Ah, you see," someone exclaimed, " of course she knows all about that."

The Magistrate resumed his explanation:

" Article 298, relating to the statutory grounds for divorce, forbade the guilty party to marry the corespondent, but that has just been repealed."

" She knew it," said one of the women with conviction.

Philippe Lagier, without moving a muscle, added:

" Surely. Nowadays before falling in love, we consult a lawyer."

M. Prémereux, somewhat subdued by his thirty or forty years on the bench, envied him this insolence. The women, not appreciating the irony, attached no importance to this remark, and by a sudden turn of conversation, spoke of the case of Albert Derize. M. Lagier had just been talking in a low tone to the pretty Mme. Derize: was that not already a sort of infidelity? They hoped that he felt a secret passion for her. They foresaw it with that divination which is the attribute of certain hostesses, who are adepts in placing their guests at table, so as to arouse sympathies and provoke emotions, and thus succeed in giving an added brilliance to their receptions. So they spoke in favor of the wife before beginning the chapter concerning the husband. They praised

her intelligence more than her beauty, and her resignation more than her youth.

"Now," said Mme. de Vimelle at last, taking the lead in the pursuit —"why, with so many fine qualities that we know of, should she have married a husband of such inferior origin?"

"That's what I say!" agreed Mme. Bonnard-Basson, who was descended from prosperous tradesmen —"

Nevertheless they agreed upon some extenuating circumstances.

"He was well-known, a member of the Legion of Honor, almost famous." But an old lady asserted:

"For a writer the Academy is the only thing that counts."

They might have objected on the score of his age, but this was a subject which had already been too much discussed.

"These differences of position between husband and wife!" went on the angular Mme. de Vimelle. "There is nothing more dreadful. That an adventurer and an adventuress should meet and be mutually attracted. Nothing is more natural!"

And to outdo her friend of one season's standing, Mme. Bonnard-Basson, who was naturally servile and sought every opportunity to flatter her,

took courage because of her hyphenated name, to add:

"Say what you will; only the old-established families know how to avoid scandals."

She was forgetting the rôle that the Sézery family had played in the history of Dauphiné, notably in the religious wars in which they had taken part with Lesdiguières. But logic is not a factor in social gossip.

Philippe Lagier had borne all these attacks with difficulty. To be silent was to approve of them, and how could he answer everyone at once? The women's principal argument he well knew concerned the humble birth of Albert Derize, but to him this seemed the most preposterous of all, for one had but to enter the house of the elder Mme. Derize to be surrounded at once by the atmosphere of order, work, honor and moral strength that had formed his past — but to realize this one must be worthy of appreciating distinction of mind and character.

"Have you read the second volume of the 'History of the Peasant'?" he asked, in order to reënter the conversation. "One might apply to the author the epigram of Mme. de Staël concerning our compatriot Monnier, whom she found 'passionately sensible.'"

"Passionately," echoed one of the women insinuatingly.

"It is glowing and accurate. It has had great success and has been translated into every language, like his 'History of the Workman.'"

Mme. Passerat interrupted:

"We are not questioning his talent."

"The Duchess of Béard who is very clever, uses it as her prayer book. M. and Mme. Derize used to dine with her."

"He knows how to plead," thought Counselor Prémereux.

"The Béards are one of the great families of France and one of the oldest. But how do we distinguish the great families nowadays? Not always by titles; that would be a great mistake. They are known by their traditions of honor and of gentleness. And it is exactly that which one meets while in the home of the Derizes."

This daring was answered by a chorus of protest:

"You are M. Derize's friend!"

"His lawyer!"

"You are defending him!"

"That is your profession!"

Mme. de Vimelle, her nose as sharp as a razor blade, had given vent to this last answer.

"At your service," replied Philippe. "But who is there that does not need to be defended?"

And he took advantage of the movement to-

ward the refreshments to take his leave. M. Prémereux rejoined him on the staircase.

"I fear you have made some enemies," suggested the prudent counselor.

The barrister, who had been amused by the fencing match smiled complacently:

"That is preferable to women's indifference." To prolong the conversation he added:

"I will go with you as far as the Place Grenette." And he immediately resumed:

"Why this haste in judging? They praise one, crush another without understanding even the underlying principles of debate."

"That all comes from Mme. Derize's call," explained M. Prémereux. "Nothing more is necessary to focus their criticism."

They reached the City Park, the shade of which, after the sunny roads, brought them a breath of cool air. It is a little park like those of England, where the trees, young elms and plane trees, mingle their branches above the damp green lawns. A black swan with a red beak was swimming on a little pond to reach the tiny island where his little house was built. Water could be heard trickling from a fountain. An avenue of lime trees in flower shed their intoxicating scent like a fine dust. At this warm hour of the day, the garden was a refuge of peace, softness and sweet reveries.

The counselor took off his hat to enjoy this pleasant sensation, but Philippe Lagier resisted these natural influences.

"No," said he, without removing his hat, "I will tell you what shocks society. It is when one presumes to ignore it."

"You are right," agreed the old judge. But Philippe did not hear him.

"Just think: to hold as worthless the prejudices of public opinion and the art of reconciling duty and pleasure. So the world detests every emotion that is sincere. What can they think of Mme. Passerat who finds a means of having two husbands — one for his money, and the other to be in the style."

"For heaven's sake, be quiet. I dine with her every Saturday and her cuisine is the very best in Grenoble."

"Or that stout Mme. Bonnard-Basson, who from sheer snobbishness is on the lookout for a titled lover."

"That is the way commerce renders homage to aristocracy."

"Or that crabbed Mme. de Vimelle who knows it, and makes use of her knowledge to further the good of her family."

"She is a good manager."

"That is, without taking into account all that we don't know."

With an indulgent, disillusioned air, the old man soothed his companion.

"You are irritable. The hardest thing in life is to accept one's fate. Everyone envies the lot of everyone else, and seeks to ameliorate his own by complicating it. This is a great source of error. What we need is a little philosophy and a few concessions; to offset our curiosity and greed by the cultivation of some of those harmless tastes which broaden our horizon without harming other people; that is to say: art, reading, travel, good food, conversation, even dissipation, or rather a little prodigality, a daily task, children to bring up! That will satisfy the most unreasonable or the most ambitious. As to passion, it is certainly detestable. It moves about in our civilized land like a blind man in a drawing-room full of knick-knacks, and it should be put out of the house. Added to that, it does not bring happiness even to the simpletons who hope to get it that way."

"It is not happiness they seek in passion."

"What then?"

"Intensity of living."

M. Prémereux looked at him as at a curiosity from a museum.

"You are young —"

"They told me that only to-day."

"Your eyes are not yet open."

" Mine? " said Philippe, surprised and piqued; he prided himself on never being deceived.

" Yes, yours. In order to judge, one must not be concerned in the trial, and you are constantly summoning yourself to appear when you make your own estimates. But never mind, the greater part of mankind open their eyes only once."

" Only once? "

" Yes — at death — and then they are quickly shut."

III

THE PLAINTIFF

An hour later, Philippe Lagier presented himself at Mme. Derize's house. Would he see her alone or in the company of Mme. Molay-Norrois? He knew it would be almost impossible to convince the latter by arguments predicated upon experience, obstinate as she was, with an unchanging, simple conviction, in an opinion which originated with the austere M. Salvage,— one of those provincial magistrates who have charge of the morals of the community. If she were present, the effect of his efforts would be nil. If she were not, his very cordial relations with the young couple who had often dined with him at Grenoble, and who had entertained him in Paris, made him feel that before the case was opened, he could take this unusual step which he was about to attempt, not as a lawyer — that would have been out of the question — but as a friend. He would make another effort to avert a break, to lay the foundations of reconciliation. Since their quarrel he had been out of touch with the people concerned. Most of his information had really come to him

from the petition to the President of the Court: that contained dates and exact facts. But of what use have facts and dates ever been to explain emotions, and how much more truthfully can a facial expression, a word of rebellion, of hatred, or of sorrow, give a clew to these intimate dramas!

As Philippe was gazing from the window at the swift, muddy Isère, he was trying with the habit of mind of a man of business who prepares his plans and forestalls obstacles, to imagine Mme. Derize's attitude. And he realized that he did not know her at all. The proof of a developed personality is to be able to find immediate answer to the questions raised by circumstances. We easily divine frankness or deceit, tranquillity or anger, nobility or quickness of decision, except in those complex characters which are the result of too much reflection, and such is seldom the case with young people. So, in their many years' acquaintance, Albert's wife had told him nothing about herself, not because of excessive reserve, but because he could draw no inference from their conversations which were never deep nor remarkable for their spontaneity, but were, on the contrary, light and frivolous, enlivened by that charm and sprightly ease due to life in Paris. He had sought in vain for a clew to her moral make-up which defied his analysis and on pursuit disappeared as a cloud in the wind.

Mme. Derize came in. She was alone — but at once took shelter behind Mme. Molay-Norrois.

" My mother is coming in. I suppose she may hear our interview."

" Certainly," said Philippe, decided to take immediate advantage of the short tête-à-tête, which chance had given him.

There was no time to lose, and yet they began by exchanging commonplaces, which generally precede every argument: preliminaries which seem as indispensable as skirmishes before a battle. She quietly told him of her own and her children's health, announced her coming departure for Uriage, where she would spend the summer to avoid the heat of Grenoble. He stared at her somewhat rudely and with evident surprise. She was wearing the same appropriate dress of dark purple that he had heard praised at Mme. Passerat's, of the beauty of which he could now get a better idea. But it was the puzzle of her charming face that he was ardently studying: it revealed no traces of life nor of the sorrow of the past few months. As long as he could remember, he had always seen it as it was now, with high color, pure and glossy as a flower, without a shadow or a line. Even the contrast of her fair hair and her black eyes did not impress him as being unusual, and her mysterious charm for him was the result of expectation, not of the past.

Realizing that she was under observation, she blushed slightly. The blood mounted easily to her cheeks. He explained:

"Your extreme youthfulness surprises me every time I meet you. They surely must call you 'Mademoiselle' in the shops!"

This compliment amused her:

"It is true;" she said, "yet I have been married eight years and my children are growing up."

Philippe Lagier did not add that at every meeting she gave him an almost irritating impression, a complex of vexation, of persistent sympathy, of disdain and of a desire to provoke her: then all these contradictory feelings changed to an indulgence, a gallant instinct of protection which he felt for his friend's pretty wife.

After these banal remarks, in accordance with his usual way, he began brusquely:

"You have made up your mind?"

"To what?" she asked, although she had understood.

"To a separation from Albert."

She seemed to be thunderstruck.

"Oh! why not after all that has happened!"

The lawyer at once expressed his point of view:

"A man like him is not to be judged by one action, but by his entire life."

She noticed that he did not speak of pardon,

but of justice, and she mechanically repeated in her surprise.

"His whole life?"

"Most assuredly. I knew him before you did. Did you ever know in what straitened circumstances your mother-in-law was left after the death of her husband? Did Albert ever tell you of her devotion, of the privations which that splendid woman went through to bring him up, and of his industrious youth, so full of effort and so productive at an age when the rest of us are wasting our days? Why did not you go to seek the advice of Mme. Derize?"

He became more animated than if he were at the bar. It was an indication that he was not unconcerned about her. And if he were interested in her, why this awkward intervention? Our feelings have a singular manner of expression. She lowered her tone of voice and said quite naturally:

"I have my own parents. And then, I have never been concerned in his family affairs."

She brought him back to the question. He looked at her, her flushed face, quiet and peaceful, her beautiful hair, too neatly arranged, her calm eyes, and the little narrow forehead shut like a forbidden door. And from that moment, irritated by that peremptory tone, and by his memories, he pleaded his friend's cause, not with his

usual weapons; irony, wit and logic, but with sharpness and bitterness, almost with the eloquence which he detested:

" In marriage, he brought to you a name almost famous; it has since become so as a result of his work and his talent which are equivalent to a fortune. It is an unusual opportunity for a woman — for a rich young woman, to enter so broad and varied a life, constantly changing, in touch with all the great minds of the day, and with all the important contemporary events. It is something to excite curiosity and interest wherever one goes, merely to have to open one's eyes and ears to receive the best teaching: that which comes to us from contact with powerful minds — to be thus connected with all the general life of one's time. It seems to me there is no fate more to be envied. Most of your friends, I am sure, only vegetate in mediocrity."

" They have their husbands all to themselves."

That was quite a feminine answer. " Life in general," " the great contemporary events," were words devoid of meaning to her,— even rather ridiculous in comparison with happiness. Elizabeth had not married to help her husband exert an influence, to play a part in his life, but merely in order to find happiness. What did this lawyer mean to convey with all his exaggerated conceptions? And now he was continuing:

"The husband that a wife has all to herself, Madame, is a poor creature. A woman's life may be complete with love. Men must have other aims. There is none higher than Albert's."

"Yes, he is following a fine career."

Philippe Lagier, in order to hear her explanation, hazarded: "He was more in the public eye, more exposed than others. Perhaps your happiness needed some supervision."

She bluntly rejected this obtrusive attack.

"I do not accept police regulation of my personal affairs."

He made a slight movement of discouragement:

"That is not the point," he said.

She reminded Albert's friend of the unfair neglect she had suffered: of the position of her family — of her circle of friends, even of her fortune. She had not come to her marriage empty-handed. She was right. This was the consensus of opinion in Grenoble. Albert Derize, of lowly origin and with no money, had made a very good match, so everyone said, in marrying Mlle. Molay-Norrois. The Molay-Norrois have an excellent name and live in great style. It was true she had received as a dowry the sum of two hundred thousand francs, of which one quarter was still unpaid because of her two spendthrift brothers — one an officer, and the other an attaché of an embassy.

The habits she had acquired at home permitted no economy either in her dress, in her house, nor in the number of her servants, so that her husband, with his thirty or forty thousand francs' yearly income, could scarcely keep up appearances in Paris. But it was known that the money for the upkeep of the house came or would come from her: that was an established fact, impossible to deny, and that no matter how many books he published, this would remain unchanged.

Philippe, unconvinced, shook his head. Albert's fame became a career, and his work an obligation. And he looked almost with irritation at this obstinate forehead, half hidden by that child-like hair, at those eyes, so soft and peaceful, reflecting an ineradicable conviction.

To convince him in her turn, she summed up as a formula a very simple argument.

"I have fulfilled my duties and he has been unfaithful to his."

Thus stated, the argument was simplifying itself. But the lawyer would not allow it to be so expressed:

"Listen, Madame, it is a friend and a very sincere friend who is speaking to you. I have defended many divorces and separations: and I have never known, never, you understand — that the faults were all on one side."

He did not add that his experience had proved

to him for a long time that security, harmony and the union of a home depended more on the wife than on the husband; she makes or unmakes the family as she does the fortune.

"Faults? What are mine?" asked Mme. Derize, smiling. "I should like to know what they are."

"I do not know yet. But I am sure that they exist."

Offended by this insistence, she defied him.

"Really? Tell me what they are."

He answered her in his own bantering way.

"Perhaps I shall tell you some day."

He was the first one who did not treat her as a victim, who did not pity her as a brave little martyr, and although she felt this opposition to be friendly, it hurt her. To conclude the conversation, she declared:

"All is over between us. . . . I do not . . ."

She stopped short, puzzled by the confidence which came to her lips. What was she going to add? To find out he repeated in an insinuating tone:

"You do not . . . ?"

"I no longer love him."

"Then you never loved him."

"What do you mean?"

"To love when someone loves you, when one spares you every struggle, every annoyance,

smoothes your life for you like a wide road where nothing stumbles across your way, that is a simple matter! How does one prove one's love? To love when one is deserted, forgotten, left alone, struggling with every difficulty, or even when one's heart is trampled upon,— yes, that is indeed to love."

"That is to lower oneself. I have my pride, my dignity — everyone understands it for oneself in a different way."

And convinced of her own right, she asked:

"Is this the mission with which my husband has entrusted you?"

Almost roughly, as if he took an unconscious delight in ill-treating her, he answered:

"No, Madame. Albert gave me no mission of reconciliation."

"Ah!"

"I have another mission to fulfill," he added without noticing this exclamation which might indicate vexation.

"You are taking a great deal upon yourself."

As if to accentuate these words, Mme. Molay-Norrois entered the drawing-room. She still had her hat on and was carrying her parasol. Hearing of M. Lagier's visit, she came in without delay to bring help to her daughter, whom she still treated as a little girl, and all of whose problems she willingly took upon herself. From that time

on, the interview was doubtful, but it had to be carried to a conclusion, once it was begun. Philippe, about to give an explanation of his friend's wishes, realized the audacity, almost the impropriety of broaching this subject directly. However, he decided he would do so. After all he was only an intermediary. Then the circumstances required this solution, which was, after all, the most reasonable. He explained to the two women that separation would necessarily raise the delicate question of the custody of the children.

"Albert shall not take them from me," said Elizabeth resolutely.

"He will certainly not take them from you. But he wants to have them for several months each year."

"Several months?"

"Yes. And look at the unfortunate position of those children, to be shared, and to be dragged about in two directions."

"No, no, I shall not share them. He has forgotten us. Henceforth he can leave us in peace."

She did not require her mother's help to defend her rights. Philippe Lagier thought this the psychological moment for presenting the proposition of his friend.

"Despite his sorrow, he will renounce these paternal rights; he will submit to all your demands, but only on one condition."

"And that is?" asked the women.

"You know that a divorce or a legal separation can easily be obtained without stating the actual reasons, but merely by presenting an insulting letter prepared to fit the case, or to bring about a departure from the conjugal home. It is sufficient that the two parties are agreed, both desirous of avoiding a scandal, and not wishing to furnish food for gossip."

"What condition?" repeated Elizabeth, who could not imagine.

He leisurely dilated upon the customary precautions.

"It is in a word, mutual consent, which is forbidden by law, but to which jurisprudence closes its eyes. And besides, how can the truth be disputed? In this way the procedure is curtailed and the public loses interest in a case which has become commonplace."

"Well?" asked the young wife who thought only of her own particular case.

"Well, Albert is willing to accept all the conditions that you think fit to impose upon him,—provided that no name be mentioned at the trial."

"Ah," said Elizabeth simply, and her eyes filled with tears. Two seconds later the tears were dried, and the charming face had regained its usual composure, so that Philippe had his

doubts about the genuineness of an emotion of such short duration.

But Mme. Molay-Norrois let her indignation have full play.

"The miserable wretch! He is thinking of that creature's honor!"

And turning toward her daughter, she encouraged her in her refusal.

"You are not to have conditions imposed upon you, you are only to dictate them. The judges, when they hear of your husband's behavior . . . will not fail to give over the children to you. How could they place them, if only for a few days, in the care of a man who has remorselessly abandoned them and at present thinks only of his mistress? A bad husband makes a bad father."

"The judges do not willingly deprive a father of the right to take care of his children."

"He himself has forfeited that right. Did he raise any objection when my daughter went away? And does he not declare his willingness to give them up forever — forever! if we will protect the honor of this compromised woman? Isn't that monstrous?"

"You are misconstruing Albert's feelings, Madame. There are self-imposed obligations which a gallant man cannot fail to meet without losing his self-respect."

"He has only the obligations of his home," said Mme. Molay-Norrois.

Philippe, addressing Mme. Derize, read a brief excerpt from one of Albert's two letters.

"And suppose it were from tender memory, from pious deference that he refused to dispute with their mother about the care of the children? Suppose he evidenced thereby his continued affection, his confidence? As to the allowance which he means to give them, he begs you to fix the amount."

As he concluded this sentence relating to the financial advantages, to which she had never as yet given a thought, the young woman gave expression to her revolt:

"It is not a question of that," she said decidedly.

Somewhat surprised at this disinterestedness, which was diametrically opposed to all her preceding answers, Philippe insisted upon another argument:

"Of what advantage would a scandal, at the hearing, be to you? What benefit could you gain by it? Are you not satisfied that the separation will be pronounced in your favor and that the arrangements are in your hands? Think it over, if you care to, for several days, before making a decision which may be so serious."

Elizabeth looked at her mother as if to beg for

her advice. Her smooth forehead was lined with a little vertical wrinkle between the eyebrows. Her entire face, her body, was tense with an effort of abnormal will, entirely out of keeping with the pretty childishness of the face and the accustomed carelessness of her movements. She did not wait for Mme. Molay-Norrois to give her advice.

" It is quite decided," she said. " I refuse. I will not lie. I will tell the whole truth: so much the worse for those whom it strikes."

" Quite right! " agreed her mother, not without secret remorse, for she paid no heed to the remonstrances of M. Molay-Norrois, who, since his daughter's return, had tried to dissuade the two women from any public scandal. But she was one of those good, loving honorable women, who are controlled by the ardor of their feelings.

Philippe Lagier expected this reply. The turn of decision and frankness in the young woman did not displease him, but on the contrary, seemed to be a change worthy of attention. She rejected all compromise, not because of revenge and hatred, but because she judged the results of the separation to be less important than the separation itself. There is no safer code of morals than the truth; but how difficult to follow, and — still more — to accept! Being neither complex nor meditative, Elizabeth judged it simpler to abide by it: at least she chose it of her own

accord, without submitting to any outside influence

"Besides," added Mme. Molay-Norrois, "M. Salvage has promised us that the separation will be granted very quickly without investigation."

"That will depend," objected the lawyer, "upon the document in your hands of which I know nothing."

"The document?"

"Yes, the letter to which allusion is made."

Elizabeth blushed as if she had been discovered, and felt obliged to give an explanation:

"It is a telegraphed letter. During Albert's absence, at his request, I opened all telegrams to inform him of their contents, but never letters. He had asked me to do this for him ever since we were first married. It is true that for a time I had not done so. That day he was impatiently waiting for some proofs which did not come. He had gone out. I was to telephone to him if they came. I thought that the telegram referred to them — it was chance. That was how I came to know —"

She wished to convey the impression that she did not watch over her husband's correspondence and that all spying would have been unworthy of her. By the expression of her face, even more than by her words, one would know that she was incapable of such a rôle. As a result of this at-

titude of loyalty, her youth assumed a more direct charm.

"Will you show me that letter?" asked Philippe, who, prompted by curiosity or sympathy, was going somewhat beyond his mission.

"But . . . why?"

"I shall read it sooner or later. If you will tell me what is in it, I shall be the only one to pay any attention to its contents before the case comes up. Otherwise, it will lie about in lawyers' offices. I have come here as a peace-maker, not as a lawyer. I remember our friendly relations. And if circumstances condemn Albert unreservedly, I shall request him to select other counsel."

"No," replied Elizabeth, touched. "You are his friend; it is right that you should defend him. You have already begun to do so. When you came in I was preparing to send you this letter. The lawyers have twice requested me to show it to them. Now I have no more secrets; my life is exposed to the public — it is all the same to me. I will go and get the letter for you."

But it was the life of another that she was exposing. During her absence, Mme. Molay-Norrois confided to Philippe that she wished to take her daughter away to Uriage as soon as possible, since the mere prospect of the trial depressed her, and the children needed to be in the country.

When he asked for the little girl and for his godson, her unfriendly expression changed, and her face was lit up by one of those kind grand-motherly smiles, which, as a result of much association with children, restored a little of her confident simplicity.

"Here, read it quickly," said Elizabeth, handing him an envelope which her fingers scarcely held, as if they were in contact with a flaming torch.

"He was asking for the children," explained her mother kindly —"Where are they?"

"In my room. Will you go and get them, Mamma?"

Philippe understood that no one else was to be present while he was reading the letter, and he was glad of this tête-à-tête with his former sweetheart.

Anne de Sézery, Elizabeth Molay-Norrois, figures of his youth, which still continued to affect him through the life of Albert Derize! What had become of the young girl of Saint Ismier, so baffling in her strange changes of mood? As she had come in the morning, so now again she came to his memory — the narrow golden eyes, the mouth with its drooping corners, which wore an expression of expectancy and of weariness. But on this face time must have left its trace. He looked at the writing and recognized it, although

it was stiffer, firmer, with sudden flourishes and unfinished letters. And without stopping, he read the eight pages of foreign paper which crackled under his fingers like dead leaves under the foot which crushes them.

"PARIS, this Friday.

"Was it yesterday evening that you left me, my friend, my lover? It seems to me so long ago, and you see I am coming to you first. I am so much in dread now of all the minutes which pass so quickly, adding to my years, and will so soon carry away my youth with them. When I was a young girl — very vain of having attention paid me — and you came to Saint Ismier, I sometimes tried to be a little coquettish just to please you. It is not natural to me, and I understand the art so little, that I did not make a success of it. At that time you did not guess my affection, did you? It outdistanced yours by ten years. From afar and when you knew nothing of it, it was with you. Ah! if love could but give us the power to do away with time! But when one is loved, does not that serve to make one forget unpleasant days? Since I said good-by to my old Sézery home, which was sold, to my lands, to my trees, I have hardly known any but unpleasant days. Standing on the bridge of the boat which took me to England, I leaned over to look at the water, and the water

seemed to carry away all my dreams. I felt as though I were casting my heart to the depths. What pride was required to live my humble life! And how hard I worked (I am afraid now that it may have worn me out and turned you from me) — to acquire a proficiency in the subjects which gave me the opportunity to meet you again. How I love to recall that meeting! It was just a year ago. You had come to London for that History Congress. Do you remember our visit to the Tower? I can still see the block where the Queens Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard were beheaded. You were revivifying those poor dead creatures, and I too was coming out of my grave: I can confess it to you to-day. A man who is able to reanimate to so great a degree the past, stones and even hearts, must live very intensely.

"However, a month later, when I settled in Paris to receive the little legacy from my aunt which restored my independence, I made no effort to see you again. I was too much in fear of your indifference and my own recollections. Then Summer separated us, and I wished to free myself from the emotion which was constantly deepening and which threatened to absorb me. But you came back in the Autumn. It is a season so restless, so transitory, that each day seems to be filled with importance. It is then that one's soul is full of anguish, at the same time declining and ex-

pectant. One feels as if dying slowly, with the hope of being reborn. As for me, I have never been able to be happy in Autumn; now, especially, when I am beginning to understand the inevitable frailty, the precariousness of youth which is vanishing.

"How could I have refused when you offered to show me an unknown Paris, the historic Paris where phantoms still abide? When I was quite little, I loved the portraits of my ancestors at Sézery; and for the pleasure of knowing fear, I imagined that they were coming back at night. Oh, our wonderful walks along the quays, in the hot sunshine, or in those little streets which you know, where you called up for me ghosts of the past! And St. Germain and Malmaison, and Chantilly that we visited in late Autumn, when the forest has lost its foliage, and one sees so far into its depths and into one's heart as well. Each one of our walks meant another bond to draw us together. No doubt they gave added zest to our instincts for research, to our intellectual life. Often (do you remember?) we investigated one by one those marvelous hypotheses which give us our desire for eternity. But it was for love that we were both eager. And I, I continue to tremble. Your life, you told me last night, could no longer exist without mine. But mine belongs to you for as long as you will. May it glide softly

into yours without ever harming it! Without taking it, let it be of service to you. If you knew! I have no more confidence: it has never been very powerful in me, and these last ten years have killed it. I no longer believe in the happiness I can give, and I would offer my life for yours. Direct my weakness, my love: I feel so old and so young at the same time, and I love you.

"ANNE."

A business man is always somewhat skeptical about the sentimentality of love letters. From the facts which are an integral part of almost every brief, he knows with what euphemisms or what lack of perspective they are worded. But Philippe had been too often to the Château in former days not to recognize the candor of the young girl in this tone of passionate exaltation and anticipated discouragement. He only divined in her a more intense melancholy, like a latent languor. Her eyes must be less golden, her mouth more drooping, her body more slender. In a word, she must have partially lost her physical charm, which explained her unanswerable fear of the future, and Philippe was sufficiently cruel to rejoice in all those pictures which made her less desirable.

Madame Derize reappeared first with her two children. The invisible comparison was greatly

to her advantage. Thus framed, and with all the attraction of her youthfulness, he thought her singularly powerful.

"You have read it?" she asked when he had kissed Marie-Louise and his godson, little Philippe.

"Yes, Madame, but according to this letter she was not his mistress."

She was dumbfounded at this interpretation.

"Do not trifle with me: it is unkind."

Guided by his professional skill, he had discovered an argument which he explained, not without having protested against her intentions:

"Oh, Madame, I am trying — despite you, despite Albert — to find a way of avoiding this separation. It seems to me that had you wished to do so, you could easily have triumphed over your — your rival. This letter speaks only of an intellectual attraction. The scenes to which she alludes only pertain to impressions of historical places, and are the expressions of a certain mental exaltation."

Without any definite purpose, Mme. Molay-Norrois returned. Some people have this privilege. Elizabeth gently requested her to take the children away. Marie Louise, who resembled her father, with dark eyes like his, ever in a state of eager curiosity, her features rather pronounced, was looking at Philippe and listening to him at-

tentively, while her mother feared the precocity of this little girl, who since their departure from Paris, had often asked rather embarrassing questions. As to the little boy, plump and fair, he was obstinately tugging at the tassel of a cushion which he hastened to pull off, so as to carry something away with him.

Once more alone with the lawyer, the young woman replaced the letter in its envelope.

"Now that you have read it, the solicitor will have no further use for it. Shall I refuse to show it again until the trial comes up?"

"That would be better."

So the elaborate plan arranged by the clerks in the office of M. Tabourin was frustrated. Without the knowledge of their chief they had demanded twice in an official capacity the letter mentioned in the petition, merely for the purpose of convincing themselves.

Then Elizabeth made a self-accusation of being only an ordinary woman, of not having "a soul at the same time declining and expectant, a soul of Autumn" and of being unable to understand psychological subtleties. Unaccustomed to irony, she did not hesitate to set it aside:

"Besides, Albert himself did not deny it."

"Ah, how did he defend himself?"

"He did not defend himself: he accused me."

"You?"

"Yes, he had that audacity. He complained of I do not know how many imaginary miseries which he tried in vain to enumerate. And when I asked him 'What was lacking' he answered: 'To you, nothing; to me, everything.' Those were his absurd words. And when I threatened to go away with my children he did not even try to keep me back. Do you understand now that everything is over between us? To-day he is living with that woman, whom you are asking me to spare. She is almost old, almost ugly: let him keep her. As for me — I want to hear nothing more about it. It is over forever, yes, forever. You must not speak of it again."

She shed a few sincere tears, enough to show herself to be in the right, but not enough to spoil her complexion. But this exact number was not calculated. Her self-love suffered as much as her love. He guessed this and looked with more interest at her little smooth, mysterious forehead, shaded by her well-dressed hair; at her beautiful eyes and all the lavish youth that even sorrow could not change. His consolation was expressed in the force of his final effort at persuasion; and when he had taken leave of Mme. Derize and Mme. Molay-Norrois, who had at once returned to her daughter like a faithful bodyguard, he did not compliment himself on the somewhat awkward manner in which he had fulfilled his mission. He

could only await his friend's arrival to tell him of Elizabeth's attitude. Anne de Sézery was to be put upon the rack and exposed to the public. Elizabeth Derize would justly obtain her separation; that was already settled.

As he was going along, he met the little clerk Malaunay on the quay of the Isère and did not notice him. But the latter, who knew the house and willingly sauntered about, took advantage of this meeting to congratulate himself on his farsightedness: he raised his head with a triumphant air; inhaled the evening air which, at this hour, was growing cooler, and said to himself:

"It is quite evident: he is deceiving his client. Wasn't I right to bet on the husband?"

IV

THE DEFENDANT

For several minutes after opening it, Albert Derize's mother looked at the telegram, which announced the arrival of her son with the evening express. She was surprised and happy. Then her first thought was to go into the kitchen, for she gladly kept all extra work from her servant who was almost as old as she, and having had only the one situation, had served her for forty years.

"Fanchette, we shall not dine until half-past eight."

She who responded to this very youthful, high-sounding name, turned toward her mistress, a face lined with deep creases and drawn with amazement.

"At half-past eight, Madame!"

In the monotony of life, regulated as in a cloister, a delay like this was an event, almost a scandal; but when she heard that M. Albert was the cause of it, her mouth seemed to spread from ear to ear in a kind of smile, and beneath her two prominent eyebrows her little gray eyes twinkled as if under too bright a light. Although he had grown

in every way, M. Albert still belonged to her, because she had held him when he was born. And she even continued to think of him as quite little, to overwhelm him with all kinds of little needless attentions, whenever he came, and to remind him of certain former unpleasant circumstances — such as burning the end of his back when he sat on a foot-warmer. Although she seldom went out of her kitchen, yet she had certainly noticed that Madame had been troubled for some time, and had she not heard from some gossipy neighbors, things which terrified her and pertained to one of those shameless women, at the mere sight of whom one must cross oneself? She thought at once of feeding the prodigal son with meats and pastries, and proposed having all the dishes which, from his earliest days, he had honored with his preference and which she could no more forget than a soldier his victories. This ardor had to be limited to a simple soup, a stew, some asparagus and pancakes with apricot jam.

"We will give him my room," added Mme. Derize. "I shall bring out the blankets and the sheets."

"And Madame?"

"I shall take the little room on the south side."

"The sun shines very brightly in there."

"Yes, but he will need rest after a day in the train."

And the two old women, equally devoted, made active preparations for receiving, as well as they could, the one who filled their motherly hearts. But while Fanchette, with her tongue out, was absorbed in watching her stew pan, Mme. Derize, opening her cupboard and rearranging her rooms, was somewhat uneasy. At first she had interpreted Albert's telegram favorably: this departure from Paris (which, although she had never been there, she feared as a bad town where ideas of truth and error underwent a change),— this return, must be the prelude to a reconciliation: everything contributed to her confusion. The thought of having her son to herself, all to herself, also helped to make her happy. He generally stopped with his wife and children at the Molay-Norrois apartment, which was more comfortable and roomy. This exception to an established rule, to which she submitted without any recriminations, was like a slight return for her self-sacrifice. How she would caress and pet him! Not too much, however: one must not make men effeminate; and, besides, he deserved to be scolded. For the first time since he was a child, he had caused her a real heartache. She did not recognize, did not understand his conduct. Marriage, in her eyes, was an indissoluble, sacred union, which only death could break asunder, which even death itself had not broken for her, although it

had pitilessly shattered a happiness of too short duration. What would become of children if each of the parents had the right to begin life anew? They had not asked to be born, and was it not necessary, after bringing them to light, to transmit to them that other light which is the tradition of the family? Has anyone ever realized anything without a purposeful aim and a definite acceptance? She had written all that when she heard of Elizabeth's departure and the infidelity which was the cause of it. She had even wanted to go away, but Albert told her of his proposed departure for Paris. Five times, with her slow, yet still firm step, very much to her credit, braving the recriminations and the cool welcome of the Molay-Norrois, she had gone to her daughter-in-law to induce her to be patient and to forgive, trying especially to win the interest of the innocent little victims, Marie Louise and Philippe. But she had succeeded neither in moving nor convincing Elizabeth, and had met with a formal, obstinate decision. On the other hand, she knew the character of her son Albert, imperious, even proud, as is frequently the case with superior natures. She too, sanguine in her affection, her nobility of soul and her straightforwardness, had often suffered from it. The forbearance of a mother is not to be expected from others! Elizabeth, in going away after his breach of faith, had

only acted within her rights. It remained with him to give up his passion, to link the broken ties. But she knew that he would not yield readily. And upon further reflection, the feeble hope which the telegram had raised, flew away as do birds which by chance have flown into a room and are eager to find their way into the open.

A little breeze was coming in through the open windows, after the day's intense heat. In the month of June, the light lingers late, and it was not yet evening, only that intermediate hour of twilight when the weary sun is slowly preparing to sink below the horizon. Madame Derize noticed a little regretfully this menace of a finality which was not immediate, but quite in keeping with her meditations. It was the hour she chose to visit the neighboring cemetery of Saint Roch. The dead can always wait. She contented herself with putting a little water in a vase on the bureau in his room, before a photograph, which, with time, had faded and could never have been very clear. And she even spread the flowers so that the picture was in evidence.

"There," she thought, "his father will speak to him. Ah, if only he might have brought him up."

She lived in the eastern section of the town which is almost part of the country. Parallel with the old ramparts runs the Boulevard des

Adieux, with its tall trees and its little hills covered with grass. The gate which crosses it is called by the same melancholy name, and leads to the beautiful "L'Ile Verte" that must be traversed in order to reach the cemetery. All the funeral processions pass this way. The consciousness of death is ever present. For this reason, it is a section not very attractive to prospective tenants, despite the view of the foliage, the green slopes on the left between the branches of birches and lime trees, Mont-Rachais and Saint-Eynard, whose cliffs take on, under the setting sun, a brilliant color, alternately pink and violet.

This little flat of six rooms on the second floor at the corner of the Boulevard and the Rue Lesdiguières, had been occupied by Mme. Derize only since her son's marriage. She had then believed that her task was finished, and so retreated to the neighborhood of the tombs. Until then, on Albert's account, she had lived in the newer neighborhood near Saint-André Square: young men need scenes of activity and movement, and not quiet streets and reminders of death. When she saw him in a new home and realized that he was attracted to and even taken possession of by the Molay-Norrois set, who were proud of his growing fame, she returned quite naturally to the cemetery which contained her happiness and her youth. There rested her parents, to whom she

owed this strength of resistance which results from a happy childhood, her husband whom she had lost after only four years of married life and whose memory still persisted after thirty-six years. It seemed to her as if she had not formerly had time to mourn him sufficiently, and that she was now paying a debt; as old age comes on, we have need of warmth and sunshine, and we recall both from the best days we have spent. He had been cut off at the height of his power by a crushing accidental illness, just as he was completing the building of one of those factories operated by the "white coal" which is making the fortune of Dauphiné to-day. Without a diploma he proved himself to be a pioneer. Albert's was the third attempt at prominence in the Derize family: the grandfather had already been stricken down before he found success. Thus families often present incomplete sketches of the descendant who will do them honor, or are impeded in their normal development by adverse fate, and do not succeed in flowering.

One knows what a critical period a new industry always goes through, when it is first exploited. If the leader fails, it is soon discredited. Rather than run a dangerous risk, Albert's mother, deprived of her entire fortune, had preferred to liquidate. This liquidation left to her child only an estate situated at Saint Martin d'Uriage, al-

most in the mountains, consisting of a house, farm, woods and meadows, which was not entirely unencumbered and the income of which was only a little more than two thousand francs. Alone, she would have gone there: the nearness of the church and the peace of the country were calling her. Albert was only three years old. From that time he was her aim in life. She hoped that he would realize the success lost by his father and his grandfather. To make some money and to give him a better education, she opened a kindergarten, and when he was older, asked for and obtained a modest situation in the post office at Grenoble, much better suited to her capacity for order, intelligence and good organization. In allowing him to find himself, to realize himself by first divining his worth, she gave him life a second time. He rewarded her by quick progress in his career, by his talent and later by his affection, a rather sheltering affection, somewhat changeable and very reserved in difficult periods, but which could be at times so confiding, so delicate, so deep, that the old woman, as she thought of it, felt her eyes fill with tears and her heart grow heavy. As soon as he began to earn money, he made her give up all work: Must he not be allowed to repay her? When he married, although their property of Saint-Martin, inherited from his father, and, besides, entirely freed by

himself of all debt, was inscribed in his marriage-contract and even enabled him to treat on even terms with the Molay-Norrois, yet he still continued to pay her the income, to which he added a moderate allowance, for he did not intend that anyone, not even his wife, should realize that keen struggle with poverty which he and his mother had known, in order that no such imputation should be associated with the memory of his dead father.

Nothing binds strong natures like trials borne in common. Even the sharing of physical fatigue creates a feeling of comradeship and a community of interest. During these years of struggle, an exceptional intimacy had united Mme. Derize and her son. She had gone on with her studies in order to keep abreast with him. With what understanding and respect he had helped her when seeking her advice! And how she quieted his ambitious desires, taught him this virtue so difficult to acquire, especially by strong natures, and yet so indispensable, that no ardor, no rapidity of work can make supply: patience! As if she thought him her superior, she tried to turn him from scattering his forces, from splitting up his energies, from destroying himself by newspaper work, lecturing, and all those small accomplishments which a first success seems to require, and the habitual acceptance of which becomes the

more dangerous because it satisfies a need for activity while permitting pleasant limitations. Instinctively and without knowing how to explain it — did she not smile in telling him what a superstitious respect she had for big books — she understood that concentration on a single object, strengthened by the habit of continuity, is the only way to give expression to lasting work. Thus she encouraged him to great efforts, and was doubtless of assistance in the planning of his "History of the Workman in Modern Society," so useful today, and of that "History of the Peasant in the Nineteenth Century," which was to be a résumé of rustic life, and to show its everlasting nobility.

However, she could never be induced to follow him to Paris, either because she feared to find herself out of her element, far from her accustomed sphere, or that, and rightly so, she did not wish to take a place which would soon be filled by another woman. From afar, she kept in touch with him by a regular correspondence, and the holidays found them together in their country house at Saint-Martin. Albert's marriage brought about great changes in these lives, with so much in common. She expected it, but she suffered as a result of it: nobody had her confidence. She was even spared the trouble of withholding her influence, as she had for a long time promised herself to do. Very much in love with the hesitating Elizabeth,

whose parents kept him waiting for their consent, as if they wished thereby to accentuate the value of their favor, Albert, with the impetuosity and forgetfulness of youth, turned entirely to his love. She thought she had lost him forever. The new family of which he became a member, more brilliant, more desirable than his own, set in a more striking frame, flattered him and turned his head. He was not born satiated like those blasé young men, who cannot be diverted or amused; he keenly appreciated the pleasures of luxury and society. It is often true of authors and artists whose talent demands observation and contact with life, that they are attracted by worldly things. The Molay-Norrois had a very large circle and entertained extensively. As Albert observed his young wife, he saw an unknown light shed upon his own life. It was during that time that his mother moved to the Boulevard des Adieux, and as a traveler who descends in the evening from the still lighted mountain to the plain, so she began to come again into close touch with the past, which had been concealed by the shadow of death. Later on she noticed regretfully, sadly, that her daughter-in-law had not replaced her in the effective rôle of adviser, which requires attention and daily effort. She feared that as a result of Elizabeth's one-sided character, Albert would be ruined by the failure which she believed she

had detected. But the situation adjusted itself and grew peaceful, as do those lakes, threatened by a storm and then spared. He added to his lesser writings, doubled his income, readily assumed new financial obligations and sought solitude, only to write his great work, which advanced, but with less rapidity, acuteness, enthusiasm and intellectual force. Elizabeth took charge of the health of her two children, paid visits, dressed well, retained her beautiful, placid face. And beneath this show of happiness was hidden an intimate drama, which had suddenly revealed itself, and his mother reproached herself for being unable to foresee it, when it would have been possible to avert the danger. . . .

So Mme. Derize awaited and feared the arrival of her son. She would certainly greet him affectionately,— in her loneliness was this not a great occasion? — but she would not hide from him her disapproval. Moreover, the remembrance of her grandchildren made her determined to speak her mind. With the aid of all her motherly authority and even with all her former sacrifices, to which, as a rule, she seldom gave thought, she would protest against this separation, which could not be final. As she was working herself up to her duty, the poor woman saw the day fade and the shadows rise, felt herself to be more and more possessed by sorrow and fear,

and found herself aging as the hour of his return drew near.

The room was ready, the dinner done to a turn, Fanchette was even beginning to grumble about the delay of the train, when someone knocked at the door.

"It is he," said the servant, hobbling to the entrance.

At the end of the corridor, her black dress scarcely distinguishable in the growing darkness, the mother was holding her breath, more affected than if she were seeing her child recover from a serious illness. All at once a "Good day, Fanchette," sincere and clear as usual, reassured her. The dear boy could not have changed very much.

"Albert, it is you?"

"Mamma."

He called her "Mamma," instead of "Mother" when he was particularly anxious to give expression to his affection, to return to her a power of protection, as though he were still a little boy. With the first word he warmed her heart. After coming up the lighted staircase, he could not see well in the darkness. She came toward him and he embraced her. Then he led her into the little drawing-room where there was a light, and he even removed the lamp-shade to see her more clearly. At each visit, he eagerly made this inspection, and with his penetrating glance which

dwelt upon objects, he could judge whether health and age had dealt kindly with her, so far away from him. She took advantage of this to study his expression.

Physically they bore little resemblance to each other: he tall and well-built, with fine features, somewhat pronounced, a broad forehead, heightened by growing baldness, brown eyes, little and sunken, in which inspiration was concentrated, and that ease of movement which contributes so much supple attraction to a man still young; she thin, pale, washed out, faded, also having tremendous personality in her eyes — eyes of light blue, whose deep expression was both clear and candid, as the indication of a forceful spontaneous nobility of soul, with a calm, sure judgment.

As they were trying to get in touch with each other by means of a few insignificant words, Fanchette appeared with a beseeching, tragic face, which they could not fail to understand: they had to go into the dining-room without further delay. That might have helped toward better understanding and agreement, and yet after a few sentences, they became silent, and felt very far apart. They were both thinking of that which they did not say. After the soup, as the old servant went out to bring on the next course, Mme. Derize, astonished at the tranquillity which replaced her agitation, came at once to the issue:

"You are about to be reconciled to your wife?"

He raised his head which he had bent over the tablecloth, and in his most authoritative and cutting manner, answered:

"No."

She was always uneasy before undertaking a step, but once undertaken, all her fear vanished. The brutal refusal of her son did not stop her.

"Listen, Albert," she went on, "a man may become a victim of temptation, he may make mistakes. I know that. Without God's help we are all weak, and you have quite forgotten that. But when one has a home, children, one belongs to them. Nothing in the world has the power to free you."

She was instantly able to read on the hardened features of her son the effect of her exhortation. He wore his most distant and forbidding expression, as though high walls were surrounding him. Protected and powerful he explained with perfect freedom of mind:

"I did not wish to discuss this subject with you, Mother. What is the good? But you are wrong to condemn me. A hearth, the name explains itself — it lives, it revives, it illumines. At mine, I breathed a poison which little by little enervated me. I gave Elizabeth the life which suited her. She lacked nothing. And I, I was choked. I did not want our separation. It is

she who unjustly desired it. In reality, we had been separated for years and through her own fault."

"Have you not been impatient with her? And if she had some slight faults, how can you compare them to your wrong-doing?"

"I recognize no wrong-doing."

"Ah!"

"You, you have been happy."

She answered sweetly:

"I have outlived my happiness by thirty-six years."

"That is true, but death strikes only one blow. It may leave a strengthening memory. It is less depressing than that slow, continued descent to mediocrity, to miserable monotony. There were, as it were, water-tight compartments between us."

"No, a man of your type is always somewhat alone. What are these differences of feeling compared to real sorrows: illness, poverty, so many actual griefs which are allotted by destiny. One must know how to accept one's life."

"I am not one of the resigned," said he.

"To accept does not mean to be resigned."

He made a slow movement as if to cut the conversation short:

"Do not let us discuss it any further — you cannot understand me."

"It is you who will understand, but too late."

During this discussion Fanchette, who had been coming and going, was constantly on the verge of spilling the food or breaking a plate, for she was so fearful that her master and mistress were not in accord. Nobody paid any attention to her cooking. It was not to be wondered at in Madame; one could give her boiled beef and potatoes every day and she would never notice it, but Monsieur, who, as a little boy, was so fond of his food and had such a good appetite, Monsieur who was able to appreciate a stew! It was true then that over there in Paris they had turned his head and exhausted his brain.

At dessert, Albert was the first to break the long silence which had succeeded his mother's last words, by inquiring:

"Has Elizabeth come to see you?"

"Only once."

"And you?"

"I went there five times."

As if to excuse herself for not having more frequently renewed her attempts at reconciliation, she added:

"I feel so uncomfortable in their house."

He could have embraced her for this word which had come so spontaneously from the poor woman's lips:

"So do I, Mother. . . . I have always felt uncomfortable . . . in my own house."

She regretted her remark and again they were silent under the indignant gaze of Fanchette, who went back to the pantry, raising her only available arm: he had swallowed his pancakes as if they were medicine, without showing the slightest pleasure!

As they were drinking their coffee, the last hope of the unhappy cook who served it boiling, as he liked it, Albert finally decided to say what his mother had been hoping to hear since his arrival, and the delay of which had wounded her to the heart:

"And the children?"

"They are well," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

"Do you see them?"

"Seldom. Sometimes I go to the park to meet them, but they are not always there."

"You, you *may* see them?"

This was said with a deep melancholy, but as the declaration of an inevitable fact. She rose from her chair, came over to him and placed her two hands on his shoulders.

"Albert, my Albert, you are not going to desert them?"

"We cannot push them from us," he murmured in a low voice, growing tense. "That would be worse."

But he added in spite of himself:

" Do you think that it is not painful for me?"

She knew his grief and bent farther toward him. Then he took her in his arms.

" Mother . . . one may make mistakes in love, may love many times, but one has only one mother. I dare not take theirs from them."

" Marie Louise, Philippe . . ." said Mme. Derize simply, relying on the power of those two names.

In his turn, he got up to free himself from the motherly embrace.

" Ah, do not take away my strength. I need it, I assure you."

" You would need less to come back to us."

She insisted, she put so much warmth into her voice, she held out her arms, as if to grasp hold of the victory. Fanchette who had come to take away her tray, stood at the threshold, not knowing whether to enter the room or to go back, and she waited in suspense at these effusions. He knew very well that any argument was quite useless, and he had but timidly to express one short sentence, in order to indicate his mother's failure:

" You do not know *her*. I love her."

Her name had not yet been mentioned. No doubt she would never be discussed, for the mere reminder of her existence separated them. Mme. Derize said no more: what could she answer?

In naming the children she had hoped to overcome every obstacle, and the unknown obstacle persisted with all its force.

"Your luggage?" she asked a little later, to break the awkward silence which was oppressing them.

Material details often serve to adjust a situation. She explained:

"Your room is there. You are to have mine."

"I am leaving immediately."

"So soon?"

But this protest did not express the joy she had felt in the mere prospect of keeping him, in little by little finding him changed. It was an unselfish complaint, which was based on concern for him:

"You will tire yourself."

Fanchette, who had finished clearing away the table and brushing off the crumbs, seconded this reflection like a distressing echo. Albert did not stir. He discontentedly withdrew into himself.

"When will you come back?" continued his mother, ready to content herself with the shortest space of time. "This summer?"

"It will be impossible."

Was he then planning to leave everyone, his wife, his children, his mother, his country? She was tempted to murmur, "Why did you come at all?" His visit became more menacing than

his absence. At that moment someone rang the door bell. It was unusual, at that hour.

"Shall I open the door?" asked the old servant.

"It is Philippe Lagier," said Albert. "I asked him to come here this evening. I am leaving on the ten-forty express."

Mme. Derize preceded her son into her drawing-room, to receive the lawyer. Philippe, who had the greatest respect for her, bowed and kissed her hand, which always surprised the poor woman. She understood that Albert had made the journey to Grenoble for this interview and that he would go away without seeing his children. The game was certainly lost, and since her presence was futile, she left the two men alone. The lawyer was sorry for her and retained her for a second with these words of regret:

"I tried to reconcile them, Madame. I assure you."

The despair which he understood, and the confidence of his friend dispelled the unhappiness, which old memories and Elizabeth's beauty had recalled to his mind.

"Well?" asked Albert impatiently, as soon as they were alone.

"Well, she refuses."

He briefly summed up his day, repeating al-

most verbatim the words of the petition to the President of the Court, and when he came to the account of his visit to the Molay-Norrois, he tried to explain the motive which was actuating Elizabeth, who was suffering from the injustice of fate, and intended to base her case on the truth.

Albert, who until then, had listened in silence, jumped up at these last words:

"The truth? Does she want the truth? Very well, I will tell it too. We shall bring to light our home life."

Philippe was amazed at this sudden anger:

"With what have you to reproach her?"

"I? Nothing and everything. Does one encounter in life only serious events, capable of exact limitation and definition? The greatest misfortunes are not the hardest to bear. Listen, in my loneliness — I am speaking of my home,— I have noted down from day to day my impressions of those last years. It happens that I have brought those books with me. Here they are; I shall leave them with you. You will find some causes there. I shall complete them. You will tell everything to the Court, since she wishes the truth. And I am going to contend for our children."

"I have just seen them," said the lawyer, as he took the books. "They are quite well."

With a decided movement, Albert stopped his

friend as if to tell him that this subject belonged only to him:

"I know."

Philippe Lagier, who was going to plead their cause, realized the inefficacy of any interference. The restless forehead, the hard look in the eyes, the distressed and absorbed expression of the face, showed traces of that passion about which Albert was silent. And this refusal to speak of it implied a rare force of concentration on the same object. Every confidence is a diminution: it abstracts a spark of that divine fire with which the soul wishes to be filled. Anne de Sézery invisible, was there, in that room, present and dominant.

"It is definite? You will not be reconciled with Elizabeth?"

"Never!"

Elizabeth had given expression to the same final decree. There was nothing further to be done but to let the law take its course.

"And I am going to ask for a divorce," said Albert. "And since they wish to compromise her, I shall marry her."

He stopped short without mentioning her name. In his books he had often called attention to the importance of family ties, and, like his master Auguste Comte, to the value of indissoluble marriage: what authority would he have

henceforth to defend such historical conclusions? He continued:

"There remains the question of financial arrangements. My wife will naturally undertake the administration of her own fortune. I have already asked our lawyer to make it over to her, and I shall give my children one thousand francs a month until the courts restore them to me — for at least a part of each year."

"If you remarry, the courts will not give them back to you."

Without answering, Albert went to call his mother, who was seated in the adjoining room, quite motionless and discouraged, looking at all the useless preparations of welcome: the only pair of fine sheets, carefully kept since the days of prosperity, the flowers in the vase and the photograph. She rose and followed him obediently like a woman condemned.

"It is time," he said. "Philippe is going to the station with me."

"Very well."

At the moment of leave-taking, struck by her seeming unconsciousness, he whispered to her as he pressed her to his heart:

"I have given you much sorrow, Mother."

"Yes, a great deal."

"You must not desert me."

"Oh, I . . ."

"I am going to confide Marie-Louise and Philippe to you. You will watch over them, from afar, you will see them sometimes. If you have any worries to bear on their account, you will bear them for me."

"You know that quite well."

"Au revoir, Mother, I shall come back."

"May God watch over you!"

The door closed. He had forgotten Fanchette who was awaiting her turn, wiping her eyes on her apron. Mme. Derize came back, with a slower step, into the deserted little drawing-room. She reached the window, to see her son once more, as he was leaving the house. She was thinking:

"He did not come for me, nor for Elizabeth, nor for the children. Some day, however, I feel it, I am sure, he will come back to them, to us. Perhaps it will not be for a very long time. Let us hope that the evil he will have done will not be irretrievable."

Albert, looking up, saw a light in the window which framed a black figure. But he did not hear his mother, who, bending down, was calling to him in a beseeching voice.

And on his way to the station, in the carriage with his friend, he did not say a word.

PART II

I

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

In the beginning of July, the lime trees in the city park at Grenoble were, in addition to their shade, still giving forth the heavy scent of their fading flowers. A light breeze to offset the heat of the sun could be found — there and under the trees on the promenade L'Ile Verte, where nobody goes, and where even the nurses do not willingly take their little charges.

After having thrown some bread to the black swan who caught it in his red beak with a loud splash, Marie-Louise and Philippe Derize, who had been summoned home, were saying good-by to their little friends, Jeanne and Renée de Crozet, who were earnestly telling of their early departure.

"We are going to Aix-Les-Bains this year."

"And we are going to Uriage," replied Marie-Louise who was never at a loss for an answer.

"Saint-Martin," explained her stolid brother. "It is in the woods."

But the little girl promptly contradicted him:

"No, Uriage, it is more fashionable."

She thought she had eclipsed Aix-Les-Bains. She loved to excel. On the way back Philippe protested:

"Our house is at Saint-Martin. It is in the mountains."

"Yes, but we are going to Uriage. You, you sleep like a trunk at night."

"I don't sleep like a trunk. Trunks don't sleep!"

"Grandpa says so. I listen at the open door, and have heard that we were going to Uriage not to Saint Martin. And Grandmother said that papa was dead to us."

"What's that 'dead'?"

"It is when you are buried."

"I don't want papa to be buried."

The little girl glanced at him with superiority and began to explain in trying to recall some new expression that she had overheard.

"Well, not exactly. That's what is so funny; he is not dead at all, and he is dead to us."

"Shall we see him again?"

"Of course. But you must not say so."

She inherited from her father, with his curiosity and high spirit, a definite confidence in the future.

The child was not wrong about her mother's

summer plans. The Derize family generally left Paris from July until November, spending the summer and part of the autumn at Saint Martin, a village built on the side of the mountain of Chamrousse among the lime and chestnut trees, above the castle of Saint-Ferriol. They lived in the old family mansion which Albert had inherited. It was a large châlet with its beams set in stone; with verandahs all round it, and green shutters to its windows. An avenue of plane-trees led from the house to the church. Mme. Derize, senior, had a room there, so vacation time was the best of the year for her. Out of doors all day long, the children acquired complexions like the country folk; and their cheeks grew rosy like winter apples. Albert worked undisturbed on his "History of the Peasant" and listened to the soothing voices of Nature which sang themselves into his book. But sometimes when nightfall began to come earlier, Elizabeth found that this simple life was growing monotonous; from the heart of the valley came echoes of festivity, the animation of a happy little village; above all she feared the solitude which forces one to seek distraction and happiness within.

The Molay-Norrois rented a villa at Uriage, where they met a gathering of their acquaintances. When the heat made Grenoble unbearable,

they easily persuaded their daughter to follow them.

"Why should you shut yourself up in that great lonely barn? What if your husband should take it into his head to return? Come with us — you will be much more at ease."

She had listened to them. In her husband's absence she was beginning to experience again emotions long since forgotten — fear and uneasiness. And the mere thought of the house at St. Martin with its long corridors, its suites of rooms and the monotonous silence of the country, depressed her.

Uriage, three or four miles from Grenoble, and 1500 feet above the sea, easy of access, and quite near the lowland, has at the same time a beautiful view and the invigorating air of the mountain. It is reached through a somewhat narrow and wooded ravine, at the end of which runs a peaceful streamlet — Le Sonnant. After a turn in the road there is a little hill crowned by the castle of Saint Ferriol with its ancient battlements (of which terraces have been made), its towers and its gables. Having encircled it, one finally comes into the valley of Vaulnaveys, where the bathing station is built. This valley of Vaulnaveys, very limited in extent, bounded by the Cross of Chamrousse and the mountain Les Quatre Seigneurs, has been compared to

a vessel of which the bow might be the castle of Saint-Ferriol and the stern that of Vizille, doubly historic since it was rebuilt by Lesdiguières and occupied in 1789 by the Assembly of the States of Dauphiné. It resembles a little oasis of fresh verdure between the slopes of woods and prairies. Owing to the supply of water the grass there is as bright as in an English countryside. Here and there it has been mown to make a tennis court, walks, and even a race course.

The Villa Mélèzes which the Molay-Norrois rented for the season stands against the Chamrousse along the sloping road which leads from Uriage to the castle of Saint Ferriol, so that it commands a view of the valley. Pine trees at the back and rose trees in front seem in opposition the one to the other, as happens frequently in this little corner of the world; comparable, as it were, to those faces whose natural sweetness is at first concealed under a serious expression.

On an afternoon in July, Mme. Passerat's motor brought the guests of Mélèzes to their door. She occupied a neighboring villa, where she received the old Counsellor Prémereux (jestingly called her duenna), and the Vimelles; while the Bonnard-Bassons had taken a house a little below. These ladies made all sorts of plans, and Mme. Bonnard-Basson had already discovered on the

list of visitors the names of several aristocrats whom she was eager to meet. Marie Louise declared at once that it was much prettier here than at Saint Martin; but little Philippe somewhat startled by the speed of the journey reserved his opinion. Elizabeth saw, above all, her opportunity for avoiding loneliness.

Nobody, in this affair, had given a thought to Albert's mother who was still in Grenoble, despite the heat, and was to be deprived of her little grandchildren. With the best of intentions one cannot please everybody.

As a result of her peculiar position Elizabeth had decided to live very quietly. She had spoken of it to her mother who had approved of her attitude. At first she herself took the two children out walking, manifested a reserved manner with persons whom she knew, and did not come into the drawing-room when there were visitors. One morning, as she was crossing the lawn in front of the casino, with Philippe and Marie Louise, whom she was scolding for picking a flower there, she overheard two young men conversing as follows:

"That is Mme. Albert Derize."

"The wife of the historian?"

"Yes."

"She is very pretty."

She blushed at this compliment intentionally

spoken in too loud a tone, but was not displeased to be noticed for something other than the name she bore, which was a burden to her. Her attorney had promised her that at the opening of the courts, separation would be granted without delay in her favor, more especially since the defendant, not having as yet taken any steps, would probably not appear, signifying that he did not intend to enter a counter action. So there would be time to organize her life anew. Until then there was nothing to do but wait, since she lacked nothing and had all the advantages of a home.

But this home grew more lively from day to day. There were motor parties to which she was always invited with the children. She refused; but her friends protested so vehemently or so persuasively that finally she was forced to accept. Thus she found herself in a social whirl. She was taken to the castle of Vizille which rears its enormous mass of gray stone above the blue Romanche; to the old bridge of Claix whose arch is so high that it frames the whole landscape, and over the plain of Matheysine to the little lakes of Laffrey, whose dark waters add a touch of charm to the severity of the neighboring mountains. These short afternoon excursions were gradually prolonged: the Grande Chartreuse, the Lautaret Pass at the foot of the Grand Galibier or

to Vercors, where the picturesque Pont-en-Royans, carved out of the rock, rises perpendicularly from the water in the shadow of the castle ruins. The forty-horse power car belonging to the Passerats led the way for the inferior machine of the Bonnard-Bassons, which was driven by M. de Vimelle, as favored in physique as he was weak in intellect. They bought provisions and lunched gayly on the grass, at the edge of a stream, or they went to some quiet inn which they promptly enlivened. Marie Louise was collecting souvenirs to dazzle Jeanne and Renée de Crozet, who had sent remarkable post-cards from Aix-Les-Bains. How could they break up the party at night after such pleasant days? Elizabeth used as a pretext the fact of having to put her two little ones to bed, who were overtired by the long ride, but could give no excuse for not rejoining the party. Home life which had never attracted her, was especially unpleasant to her now. She enjoyed a succession of aimless days, and soon ceased trying to hold herself aloof.

Her parents were obliged to return the hospitality they had accepted. When she appeared in a nile green gown, which she had only worn once at the Duchess of Béard's before the event which had upset her life, she saw in the women's looks that they were not genuinely sincere in the touching sympathy they expressed to her on every oc-

casion. The new-comers in their set made a great deal of her with that easy freedom which results from the absence of a woman's husband. Although she was the least décolleté of all the women, she felt a new awkwardness, which recalled her début as a young girl, in feeling her shoulders exposed: shoulders, whose mother-of-pearl whiteness was greatly admired. She had the impression that this was not her place, and her personal success only half dispelled the idea.

She felt it again, one day as she was walking with her children to Saint Martin d'Uriage. The closed châlet where she had spent so many peaceful summers, the church near-by, the charm of this hamlet lost in the woods, stirred her emotions which sensed the influence of places, as of people. She opened the chapel door, and in her prayer — very short because of her impatient companions — she had time to ask herself if this continual round of gayety were a normal existence for one in her position; if such habits of going about, of amusement and of pleasure, would not later spoil the precocious imagination of Marie Louise and Philippe, who, while rolling about in the grass and playing with the little peasants, were acquiring, along with good health, simplicity of heart. To her great astonishment, on the plane-tree avenue, the little boy, without bashfulness, asked when they would go home, but Marie Louise,

blushing and cuddling up to her mother, said:

"And papa?"

"He is away, traveling," she replied evasively.

The little girl, finding again an important association of her short past experience, became nervous and her little bosom heaved.

"When I was a child," she said excitedly, "I lived here. Papa took me away, far away to the mountains. He carried me on his back when I was tired."

"And me too," cried Philippe, who was not going to be left behind.

"He laughed all the time," Marie Louise recalled again.

Their mother was lost in silence at these recollections. She roamed along the enclosure which protected the deserted property, looked at the faded bunches of wistaria, the garden in disorder and the destruction due to neglect; then, saddened, she led her children to the path which winds by many turns towards the castle and the lawns of Uriage. In the evening she invented a headache to refuse at the last moment an invitation which she had already accepted, but the next day and the day after, new opportunities offered, and she soon ceased to struggle against so swift a tide. Her friends purposely selected as her dinner partners — not without thought of consolation — their most charming men-guests, but she

was not conscious of their intentions. After the fifteenth of August, Philippe Lagier came and stayed at the best hotel near the casino. There was nothing unusual about his being there. He took advantage of the closing of court to rest in the valley where one breathes the mountain air; every year the bar and magistrates of Grenoble are well represented here. He was immediately surrounded and overwhelmed with invitations; for he brought with him an element of interest into Mme. Passerat's little circle. His caustic wit, his constant irony, his travels and his taste for the plastic arts gave a varied turn to the conversation which made him very much sought after by women: they like the little excitement occasioned by clever paradoxes or original and boldly defended opinions. And so by general consent, it was agreed that Elizabeth and her husband's lawyer be brought together, and that so interesting a flirtation be aided and abetted.

Scorching through Uriage one day, trying to break a record, the little clerk Malaunay, in plaid knickers and with bare calves, bending over his bicycle as if he wished to bite the handle bars, still had eyes to see the young woman and her companion, as they were watching the races, so that the Tabourin office and indeed all Grenoble knew the truth about their friendship.

Philippe Lagier, in visiting Elizabeth, simply

fulfilled a duty which gave him renewed pleasure every day. After the useless preliminaries of reconciliation, the deed of separation had been sent out. It had to be answered in Albert's name, so Albert meant to seek a divorce, and in turn take the offensive. Before drawing up such embarrassing conclusions, the lawyer had gone to the Boulevard des Adieux to consult someone for whose advice he had the greatest regard.

"Here," he had explained to Mme. Derize Senior, "is what your son wishes to reply. He is not going to defend himself any longer; he is attacking. He has given me the private diary he has kept intermittently since his marriage. He thinks I am sure to find therein proofs of a continual grievance; but the incompatibility of temperament is not ground for divorce. And then, must I make use of this?"

The old lady had asked to be allowed to read these books. Her son had given permission. She had returned them to Philippe with these words:

"Albert would dishonor himself if he made public use of such writings. The charges he brings against his wife will not affect the court. But they will perhaps wound Elizabeth's heart. She is a good woman, unfortunately too inattentive and indifferent, like so many good women. Ah, if they would only open their eyes! Show

her this diary, make her promise to read it."

"This diary?" the astonished lawyer had objected. "Would it be right? Albert tells of his love in it."

"With things as they are, I see only this resort to try. Let her face this interpretation of her own life. She will even realize that this love which I abhor, but which has nothing evil about it, has something to do with her, that it has been born of her unwise carelessness. If she understands, perhaps she will find the courage to pardon and, above all, the patience to wait. If she does not understand, it would be better for Albert to legally give up his children whom he has already forgotten too much, rather than to hurt their mother. Yes, I can see only this way of reconciliation, unusual and dangerous though it be. My friend, go up to Uriage; I count on you. For my part, I shall ask Albert to cease defending himself, if he must use such arguments."

"But he wants a divorce."

Like a Christian she answered:

"'Men have no power to put asunder whom God has joined together.' Life in its brevity still gives us time to exhaust our passion and to recognize the right road, however late. Divorce is irreparable. If he divorces her, I shall not survive it; I will tell him so, if need be."

Philippe had bowed. This little shabby flat

was the only place in the world where he left his skepticism outside the door.

Now, before giving up his weapons to his charming antagonist, he wished to observe and study her. He purposely acted deliberately. That is rather the habit of a complex mind. A little earlier in the summer he would have found indications of uneasiness in her glances, and in her social retirement. But when he arrived at Uriage she was quite calm and allowed herself distraction. The coterie of admirers which her friends slyly arranged for her only served to irritate the lawyer. It was composed of insignificant young men, of whom there are many at the watering-places, who would inevitably attract a woman so young and so neglected. Why should they not believe that she was easy prey, being insufficiently protected by lax parents who were absorbed in their own worldly interests? Elizabeth endured them without ennui, but without pleasure. Philippe sent his shafts among them; the on-lookers who were amusing themselves about it, introduced him to take the place of all these admirers, and the young woman did not even deign to notice their absence.

What was he expecting from these meetings? His plans and unforeseen opportunities provided a reason for the necessary interviews. He decided to take Albert's note-books to Elizabeth.

She received him in the garden, where, before a background of pines and birches, a few clambering roses were blooming: it was already September.

"What is that package?" she asked him jestingly.

He used that bantering tone which destroys all positive convictions and ultimately leads to a mental attitude that can take nothing seriously.

"Those are your faults. They are many."

"My faults?"

"Have you forgotten our talk at Grenoble. I told you that never in my career had I known a case of divorce where all the grievances were on one side. You have challenged me to enumerate yours. Here they are."

"Well, I am listening," she replied incredulously.

"No, no, you will read them."

"You have taken the trouble to write them."

"No — not I."

"Who then?"

But she had already guessed and thought it wiser to be on her guard.

"It is Albert. Take them."

"Oh, no, thank you."

He took no notice of her refusal.

"In two hours you will have time to decipher these notes. You can read them this evening and return them to me to-morrow."

" I am dining with Mme. Passerat to-night."

" Ah yes,— I am invited, too. And to-morrow? "

" To-morrow we are going to motor to the Castle at Sassenage, and our evening is engaged too."

" Well, you will find a free day."

" Why do you want me to read these books? "

Her refusal was becoming less positive: this persual imposed no obligation upon her.

" You will find there the complaint I am going to formulate against you in my brief."

She was astonished, and blushed, which gave her face the expression of a young girl about to make her début.

" I thought," she said, " that Albert was going to make no defense."

This noticeable anxiety aroused Philippe Lagier, whose reply was not without a touch of cruelty.

" He will make so good a defense that he will sue for a divorce — not separation."

" Ah," she murmured, and the color which had overspread her cheeks faded quickly.

He immediately regretted having tormented her. Was Albert's viewpoint so definite that he had a right to use it as a threat? And had he not decided to play a double rôle, in order to decline to take part in the trial?

"Does he wish to marry her?" she asked weakly.

"I do not know."

But she was ashamed of her question and quickly expressed her indifference.

"Oh, it's all the same to me. He may do as he likes; he is dead to me."

It is true that she added, unconscious of her contradiction:

"Very well, leave me the books. I will glance over them when I have a moment to spare, and shall return them to you."

That evening at Mme. Passerat's dinner, Elizabeth, usually so poised and calm, evidenced nervousness; and he did not doubt that she had at once begun the reading of her husband's diary. During dessert he leaned toward her and questioned her in a low voice. Mme. de Vimelle, seated at the other end of the table, made use of this to give vent to a spiteful reflection.

"Have you read it?" he asked.

"What? . . . No, no, not yet. I have not thought of it."

He thought she was feigning astonishment, and seeing her so good an actress, he retracted that impertinent patronage which he had accorded her so-called simplicity. But he was wrong. She had carefully arranged Albert's note-books and was only awaiting the opportunity to take them

out of the bureau. The past was the past. It could not be changed. Being a woman of order and logical mind, she liked definite situations. This reversion to the past did not attract her. With what had she to reproach herself? Nothing, according to the world's opinion, absolutely nothing. Then of what could anyone accuse her, who had been so abominably deceived, and for a woman older and less attractive than she?

Another cause had contributed to her confusion. She had been the first arrival at Mme. Passerat's, in order to escape from the temptations of her own awakened curiosity. The salon on the ground floor was not yet lighted. In crossing the lawn in front of the villa, walking carefully because of the dew, she overheard some words of a conversation, the terms and familiarity of which were significant, and saw, or rather guessed, from the open window, hardly distinguishable in the shadow, that a couple whose voices she recognized were sitting there. Without thinking, she hastily ran across the small space which separated her from the Mélèzes, and reached her room to hide the shame she felt in discovering a liaison which her filial devotion would never have permitted her to suspect. When her mother came to look for her, and scolded her for being so late, she understood that she must gain control of herself and keep the secret. If only the poor woman

with her might always remain in ignorance. When the two women entered, Mme. Passerat received them in that exaggerated manner which has become fashionable, held both hands of her good friend, Mme. Molay-Norrois, and embraced that dear Elizabeth who unresponsively suffered her kiss, but was upset by it all evening. Thus she appeared excited and uneasy to the observant Philippe Lagier.

Two days later, not having seen her in the interim, he inquired again.

"And our book of grievances?"

This was the name he had given to the private diary of his friend. She still requested more time, and for some days he did not meet her. Indeed she went out seldom. She had proposed to take her parents to Saint Martin to finish the season there; but her father laughed at the offer and her mother never disagreed with him.

Philippe attributed her sudden reserve to her impression of the reading. He was surprised, and unconsciously annoyed at the power which Albert continued to exercise over her from afar. And to add to his irritation, his friend informed him in a letter bearing the German postmark, that he had given up the idea of defending himself in court, and had changed his plan of divorce; perhaps he had listened to his mother's advice, or else his well-ordered mind revolted against the issue

of an open breach, or perhaps he had agreed with Anne de Sézery to defy the law.

When the lawyer at last succeeded in joining Elizabeth, he avoided revealing this new situation to her, as if he no longer intended to reconcile her and her husband, and he did not even ask for the note-books. But he tried to distract her, to amuse her by his conversation.

It hardly seemed the beginning of September with its earlier sunsets, more vaporous lines at the mountain summit less clear on the horizon, and its sharper air. The well-watered lawns retained their even green, and as for the clumps of pines, ever green, they need never fear the threats of Autumn. Elizabeth had come as far as the tennis court, but had declined to take part in the game. She instinctively sought out places where there was movement, where she was sure not to hear the voice of her heart or mind. A young brunette in a white flannel dress draped in straight folds, was enlivening the party with her laughter, her remarks, her cleverness. Stopping, on the alert for the ball, running to meet it, or drawing back to return it with all her strength, each of her movements brought into play the curved and flexible lines of her well-built body. Thus she was making a series of little Tanagra studies, and it was a delight to follow her. But she knew it, and from time to time glanced at Philippe, whose

age, fortune, and career she well knew, for nowadays civilization is perfected. Elizabeth, whose sorrow had made her keener, noticed this little affair.

"Someone is looking at you," she said.

"I am no longer in the marriage market." And it was he who in his droll manner pointed out all the flirtations which were going on about them. M. de Vimelle, slender and very graceful, was disappearing under the trees with Mme. Bonnard-Basson, who, too tightly laced, often stopped to get her breath. As she was known to be the most scheming young woman in her set, he said:

"She has managed all the same to reserve some aristocratic admirers for herself."

Obliging Mme. de Vimelle had loaned her husband to her friend to take her out walking before dinner.

"I don't understand it," replied Elizabeth to the sarcastic observations of her partner.

"Bah, M. de Vimelle, who is ruined, is besides, the stupidest animal between Paris and Peru — Japan and Rome. She uses him as best she can."

"Nobody finds grace in your eyes."

"I go about with my eyes open."

"You had better close them."

Mlle. Rivière, who had won the last set, as well as all the preceding ones, came over to wish them good evening. Her dull complexion, heated by

the game, had become a deep scarlet, and seemed to be burning. Her white teeth glistened. Her eyes sparkled.

" It is a great game," Philippe explained, close behind her, scorning the evident interest she showed. " Her whole soul is in her face."

For several days he had been familiarizing the young woman with all the scandals of their set, making her realize how unimportant they were considered. His insolent and distressing pessimism fell upon prepared soil. Elizabeth, after the shock of her father's conduct, found her illusions completely destroyed.

After many handshakes had been exchanged, tennis was given up. Although the mountains were still covered with the oblique rays of the sun, the valley was in shadow.

There was a definite line of demarcation between themselves and the others. Nobody had joined them. They alone remained behind, as if their tête-à-tête were respected. Vaguely disturbed by this seclusion, Elizabeth directed their steps towards the Mélèzes.

" When the night comes on here it looks as though the mountains were coming nearer and the pine trees were drawing nearer, as if to envelop us."

In order to calm her, Philippe came closer, and murmured in a confidential tone.

"Why are you so sad now-a-days?"

"I am not sad."

Without regarding this denial, leaning toward her, he continued, in a voice which had ceased to be strident, but became, instead, full of charming inflections, cultivated by that art with which he touched such varied chords at the bar:

"You think your life is finished when it is only just beginning. And life can be so beautiful. . . ."

She found no ready answer. She was often given to self-pity; in thinking now of her keen suffering for one so young and through no fault of her own, it seemed to her like a new misfortune. Understanding that she was depressed by this introspection, he pointed out the mountain tops which were priding themselves on still retaining the light; then he pointed to the plain, towards the meadows and the woods which were in peaceful repose. Two or three couples, rather far away from them, acknowledged lovers, and so accepted socially by general agreement, were returning to the villas and hotels.

"We are very comfortable here, are we not? When I came to Uriage you were so popular, so sought after . . ."

She did not grasp the exact meaning of the last word.

"I did not notice it," she said.

"I noticed it for you," said Philippe.

In a low voice, choosing his words with care, he continued:

"If you only knew how that irritated me."

"Why?" she asked naïvely, as they were passing through a little cluster of pine trees which hid them from sight.

Nevertheless, she hastened her steps. It was not yet the psychological moment. The love-making of a man of forty is more clear-sighted and artful, less hurried than that of a young man. He evaded the issue, rather than declare himself.

"When you were a young girl, I had dreamed of asking you to marry me."

"So I have been told."

"Ah. . . . If you had been happy, I should not have recalled it. I should never have reminded you of it. But I cannot bear the look of pain that crosses your face. You are so young. So many years are before you to retrieve the grief of the past."

She stopped, overwhelmed, trembling. So many years . . . Yes . . . until the old age of her father. The errors of the past: the soul of Autumn, Anne de Sézery. That was the beauty of living!

"Why do you speak to me like this?" she said in a stifled voice.

He read trouble and confusion in her frightened

eyes, which stared at him, and so mistaking her attitude, he dared to hold the young woman's hands affectionately.

"I am so sorry for you. Do you not understand?"

She freed herself, tried to recover her breath, then rebelliously protested:

"You! . . . Oh, you! . . . Leave me."

"Madame," he begged.

But she had already fled down the path. Motionless, his feet rooted to the spot, he watched her distinct figure until a tree suddenly hid her from sight. Then, seeking support, he threw himself on the grass. His deepest emotions were always controlled and lent themselves to the demands of reason. He pleaded in his own defense the extenuating circumstances of the hour, the season, his vanishing youth. Can a man see with impunity almost daily a young woman of charm, who shows that she takes pleasure in his society? He tried unsuccessfully to become tender in thinking about himself, his loneliness intensified by a superior mentality, hampered in his search for happiness by hesitation, excessive analysis and disenchantment. One thought alone, which he tried to put away with all his force, overlapped all others, as a higher and swifter wave submerges those which precede it: he had betrayed his friend. After one last thought of Albert's aversion, he

gave way to his self-contempt, and lying on the earth, his face hidden, humiliated in his faith in himself, he wept tears of despair. This was a moment which he no longer had the power to dismiss; henceforth, its remembrance must come to him relentlessly every time he sought the silence of his inmost heart. . . .

II

THE WATCH

Elizabeth hurried to her room, as a bird with heavy wings beaten down by a tempest rushes to find shelter. Her mouth somewhat twisted, her lips dry, her limbs wearied by the effort to climb the stairs, she fell into an armchair, where, alone with herself, she could better bear her state of fatigue, and uneasiness of heart. This scene had been surprising and terrifying to her, who disliked violent or even unexpected sensations, and sought nothing but peace, order and daily unvarying monotony. Darkness, kind charitable darkness, enveloping her like a veil which hangs lightly from the shoulders, lessened her indignation, but made her more self-pitying. She was confiding in herself as in a friend, and so found relief, when her mother came in, scarcely touching the door, as if in the intimacy of the family, it were almost unnecessary to announce oneself.

"Elizabeth," called Mme. de Molay-Norrois.

Elizabeth did not answer at once, finding added vexation in the fact that she who was so seldom in need of it, was even at this time unable to have

a corner in which she might take refuge undisturbed.

"You are tired — why did you not ring?"

"I am not tired, Mamma."

How could she stem this maternal solicitude? Mme. Molay-Norrois had already lighted a lamp, closed the window to keep out the mosquitoes and the September breeze, and was studying the dear face, whose every expression she knew.

"You are flushed. You have been crying. And you have told me nothing."

"I have a headache, that is all."

"A headache? You were out all afternoon. It is not a headache. You have some trouble and you will not tell me."

For the first time the young woman understood that even with those who love one best, one is often alone, and that any presence, even the dearest, may be intolerable. For the first time too, she really understood the tone of voice in which she was being addressed; the one which is suited to little girls, to encourage them, or quiet and control them. By what inexplicable mistake did they continue to use it in speaking to her? Misfortune itself had matured her, and yet they treated her like a little child. Her sadness was intensified by it, as is the pain of a wound that is inflamed by unskillful care.

"There is nothing the matter," she reaffirmed.

Her mother, baffled, was surprised and sorry, and finally, to change the subject, said in an offhand manner:

"We are dining with the Vimelles to-night; you have just about time to get ready."

"I shall not go."

"What? You have accepted their invitation. It is too late to refuse. Then, the other day you declined at the last minute. And you have just told me you are not ill — no, no, you must come; it is absolutely necessary."

"Nevertheless, I shall not go," Elizabeth repeated with a new note of authority.

For Mme. Molay-Norrois there were no small and great events. She valued equally social obligations and those which concerned the serious affairs of life. Her daughter's defiance shocked her respect for the laws of society, as much as it offended her affection which she now considered to be of no avail. She tried to coax her with gentle insistence which she finally saw would produce no result.

After her departure and slight thought of regret concerning the misunderstanding, Elizabeth found joy in again indulging her melancholy. She was soon aroused out of it, however, by her father who did not even knock at the door, and came in quite unceremoniously, dashing, beaming, smiling, his eyes bright, his mustache curled and

a rose bud in the buttonhole of his dinner coat.

"He, too!" she thought, irritated and cross.

He paid no attention to her unfriendly attitude. He never needed to exert himself with Elizabeth, who was always so tractable.

"Well, little one?" he asked, playfully. "You have nerves, you have asserted yourself, you have made your mother cry, and she is crying, on my word! She certainly needs very little to make her weep."

Curled up in her chair, she did not deign to answer him, and to avoid saying too much, she drew her lips together, so that her mouth was tight shut. Despite his white hair, he was very lively in his evening attire. If he had had any idea of what she was thinking of him, he would have ceased to annoy her.

"Are you ill? No . . . ? Besides, women's nerves! Come along with us. The Vimelles will be so offended if you do not come. Philippe Lagier will amuse you. He is witty and lively. He is rather making love to you, Philippe Lagier, eh. Eh!"

"No one is making love to me."

She said this in such a peremptory way that he stopped short in his teasing. This little girl was certainly in a bad temper; it was better after all to leave her to sulk as she would. The art of living was fast disappearing when people no longer

knew how to conceal their troubles, to bear them with fortitude, in order not to burden their neighbors. Society would soon sanction discussing one's private affairs publicly and wearing a sorrowful expression. And that was the inevitable result of a long period of democracy. So now he only thought of hastening his departure. Happily he found some comfort in seeing his face, still fresh, reflected in the mirror of the wardrobe.

"Well, rest, little one, if you are tired."

This expression of interest satisfied his paternal dignity, and as soon as he was out in the corridor, he cheered up.

Elizabeth, thus disturbed, was trying with difficulty to recover the lost trend of her reflections, when her children, having heard of her return, rushed into the room. They had just come in from their walk, and made a great noise with their hobnailed shoes. They were surprised not to see her in evening dress.

"You will be late," declared Marie Louise.

"I am dining with you, my darlings."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Philippe joyfully, using his big voice like a bell.

And the little girl was already calling from the staircase.

"Agatha, set three places."

Nothing pleased her so well as giving orders, except listening to stories or teasing her brother.

At table she did the honors of the dinner, as if her mother were a guest. Elizabeth was amused, but not without a touch of bitterness, noting therein the result of her frequent evenings away from them. Her mind receptive, she also realized that her children, entrusted too much to the care of servants, were losing many of their good habits; the one being proud of all the luxury she enjoyed, and particularly of the Passerat's beautiful motor with which to dazzle her less-favored playfellows; the other eating with his fingers and using kitchen slang in his conversation. Little disposed to scold them, she promised herself to look after them more carefully and to begin to put them to bed herself, a fact of which little Philippe took advantage to show her all the tricks he had learned to do in his night-shirt.

As soon as he was in bed, all curled up with his knees almost under his chin, the little man fell asleep, and, once asleep, he did not move any more than a trunk,— a habit for which Marie Louise took him to task. She, on the other hand, fought sleep with obstinate resistance, and only gave in at last when her eyelids could no longer keep open to see the light of the lamp.

"Tell me a story," she asked when she was tucked in.

Elizabeth sat down beside her and thought her being there would soothe her.

"I don't know one."

"Papa always knew some."

She rarely spoke of her father. This remembrance astonished the young woman and was not pleasant to her.

"Yes," said the little girl, "the one about Jeanne d'Arc and about Cyclops."

"About Cyclops?"

"Yes, the one who had only one eye in the middle of his forehead, and who let the sheep get away from him."

Albert Derize had willingly pruned the forest of the epics, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the "Song of Roland" like any good woodman, to make of them playthings for his children.

"Go to sleep, darling, go to sleep."

"Well, I shall have to tell you one, Mamma."

"You must go to sleep."

"The one about the cup of happiness, if you like. There was once a knight who had a very sad wife in his castle. And she went to sleep when he was away hunting. And then he saw fairies dancing — do fairies dance?"

"Of course, they do. Go to sleep."

"And he saw one there who was the most beautiful of all, and she carried a golden cup with diamonds. It was not for champagne. It was the cup of happiness."

Her mother bent over her, thinking she was

asleep, but the little voice continued faintly after a moment.

"So the knight tore it from her hands and rode off on his horse and escaped, and he made a present of it."

"To whom?" Elizabeth asked mechanically.

"To the lady . . . who was sad in the castle . . . and he went to sleep when he was hunting. . . ."

The story went on like this in a circle, but at last the lids with their long lashes ceased fluttering like little wings, and after two or three nervous movements, the child went to sleep on her pillow of golden curls.

Elizabeth stood motionless for some time comparing the sleep of Marie Louise with that of her brother. She was a much more imaginative child, of finer sensibility, who had to be soothed and strengthened. This duty devolved on the mother alone — now that Albert was no longer there. Albert? Where was he now? Could he desert them? She did not love him now, but when he was there, she felt the house was stronger, better protected from all harm.

To escape this recollection which tormented her, close to her children, she got up and went to her room near by. She half closed the door after her without entirely shutting it, that she might hear the least sound and be out of the draught.

After taking these precautions she hastened to open the window, as she was exceedingly warm.

The moon had risen, but was hidden by the roof, and its light resembled a cloth spread over the country. The numerous lawns, without a shadow, unfolded themselves in the distance, smooth, pale and even, only broken here and there by groups of trees, standing like mysterious conspirators in the dark. Scattered stars twinkled on the edge of the horizon, without forming very distinct constellations. And over the neighboring villa, where the Passerats were living, a larch tree stood out, its curved branches outlining the silhouette of a pagoda on the wall.

This silence, this peace which Elizabeth thought she would enjoy on the balcony with the scent of the rose bushes, was disturbed by the noise of fireworks that were being let off at the casino. Rockets sprang up with a loud report, disappeared into the air and fell back again in a colored rain, whose effect was half-destroyed by the moonlight. And this was the signal for shrieks, applause, the expression of festivity, mingled with the fanfare of trumpets.

She went back into the room. The noise of her heart was sufficient for her. Nothing could lessen the impression of disgust that Philippe Lagier's avowal had left upon her, and which she could not forget, as she went from room to room.

She drank a glass of water into which she had poured a few drops of ammonia and aniseed to take away the taste of ashes which her lips retained. But they were immediately dry again. A half forgotten, unexpected, almost ludicrous recollection of her childhood came suddenly, to give concrete meaning to her impressions. As a little girl she had read in mythology that there were men with goats' hoofs called fauns. Amused at this peculiarity, she had spent an entire day gazing at the passers-by in the street. "Have you met any?" her best friend and confidante, Blanche Servin, asked incredulously. In order not to make her book seem untrue, she had replied: "How can one tell if they have shoes on?" Our dispositions exert so much influence upon our individual interpretation of things that this old recollection, instead of being a diversion to her, satisfied her desire for revolt and augmented her dislike. One must see life clearly. Well! she had opened her eyes, and saw about her only ignominy and the basest deception, not even glossed over by the outward decency. One woman had a lover, not for love, but to appear up-to-date. Another took advantage of her husband's liaison. That old man — her father — allowed his mistress to be on friendly terms with his wife and daughter. And as to that honor — of which men pretend to make a religion, even if

they have renounced every other law, she knew what to think of that, since the lawyer, the counsel, the most intimate friend of Albert hoped to profit by these services to offer himself as a comforter. There was no happy medium between the blindness of her mother, her own before her separation, and the recognition of this wickedness which haunted her like a nightmare. To see clearly was to gaze upon the ground, to find the cloven foot. Bah!

A sigh, then a half stifled cry which she heard from the adjoining room aroused her from the disgust into which she had sunk as into a quicksand, made her get up from her chair and walk softly with a mother's consideration. The little boy had not stirred; he was still in the same uncomfortable position. It was Marie Louise who was sleeping restlessly. Elizabeth put back the blanket which the child had thrown off, and seated herself between the two beds. By the light of the lamp she looked for a long time from right to left, comparing the motionless features of the two little sleeping faces, one quite at ease, the other fidgety and, even in this semi-conscious state, restless, as if the imagination back of the closed eyelids had remained awake and continued to work even with the lights out and the stage darkened.

"What will become of these dear mites?" she thought, turning from thoughts of herself. And

the fear of the future brusquely aroused her. Later on, very soon they would learn what life meant, alone, quite alone. Even a mother's most tender devotion was powerless. They would live again the everlasting experience which each must live alone. They would meet the same sorrows, feel the same bitterness, know the same despair. For the world would not change for them. She had discovered it as it is in all its reality. Ah, at least, if she could not protect them, could not accompany them on the road, ought she not strengthen them by cultivating their understanding of disillusions, especially the little girl who took her little joys and sorrows with such intensity and was not able to distinguish, even in her games, the difference between fancy and fact, which was never sufficiently attractive to please her whims?

The night light gave to the objects in the room an animated appearance, and lengthened the shadows to the ceiling. Elizabeth felt herself surrounded by dangers and knew the necessity of protecting her children, threatened as she was. Since her departure from Paris she had given her entire time to the new life which was arranged for her, in the daily distraction of which she had forgotten her troubles. But this new life for herself and the children demanded constant attention and devotion. Now she was meeting it face to face and she feared it. Her arms hanging mo-

tionless at her side, she gave herself up to the discouragement of the minute, while she was beginning to grasp the importance of courage. Never, never would she, so unprepared, educated and trained as she was for a very ordinary lot, be able to adapt herself to the life before her.

"The cup of . . . happiness . . ." stammered Marie Louise in her dreams.

The cup of happiness! What irony this evening! Was it not too unjust that she should be thus punished for no reason; in the fullness of her youth be overwhelmed with so many burdens and have so little help! In her despair she detested Albert, who had deserted her in such cowardly manner. No doubt he was no worse than others, weak as they were, a slave to his desires and cruelly selfish. Now she knew him! How he had deceived her!

"What have I done to him? What have I done to him?" she kept repeating to herself as she wept.

She thought of the note-books which Philippe Lagier had brought her, which might furnish an answer to her question. What hypocritical answer? When the maid came to stay with the children, she went back and lit her lamp. Quite overcome with suffering and bitterness, her nerves trembling, she began the reading which kept her awake late into the night.

III

ALBERT'S DIARY

The note-books belonging to Albert Derize which Philippe Lagier had given to Elizabeth, contained the story of his life from the month of January 1902 until April 1905, that is to say from the sixth year of his marriage until the time of the separation. In accordance with her habit of regularity, she opened the earliest book at the first page. It was truly a singular diary; it was difficult to recognize oneself therein. In the beginning she saw only notes concerning history, observations of real life, plans of articles, lecture notes hastily written down in a few lines, short accounts of visits to some historic spot, all that preparatory work indispensable to an active writer whose brain demands fresh copy every day. She was at once disheartened, being unused to seek explanations. Again this return to a dead past seemed so useless to her. She was about to give up reading, when a little cross marked in blue pencil caught her eye. The date, underlined with a stroke of the pen, attracted her attention; May 25th, 1903. It was the anniversary of their wed-

ding. Four lines recalled it to her memory — she interpreted them with amazement:

> "To shudder, to weep over life, to pray —
> That is only the coward's way,
> The strong soul stays where his duty lies
> And meets it bravely, suffers and dies."

No comment accompanied this disturbing quotation, so strange to mark an anniversary. What did it really mean? Of what sorrow, what deep suffering was it the expression? And why was it marked with that blue cross? Elizabeth felt a thrill through her whole body, like a hare who in the safety of her form, hears the hounds approaching. She hesitated to commence a journey which she knew would be dangerous. Since her opinion concerning the treachery of her husband was alterable, what was the use of this painful return to the past? She turned over a leaf; another blue cross marked a new passage in inverted commas:

"O pictures and visions of my youth, O love glances, divine moments, how quickly you have vanished! To-day I am thinking of you as of my beloved dead."

She looked at the quotation marks to reassure herself. Albert used these note-books as an aid to his memory when transcribing his thoughts and impressions into his books. What importance then should be attached to pessimistic literature without foundation in fact? For in reality, May,

1903, signified to her only peaceful days, unvarying, colorless days, such as she loved to live. She read on and saw the blue crosses becoming more numerous, here and there replaced by broken lines in the margin, the entire length of the page. Philippe Lagier had no doubt marked the paragraphs which he meant to use in the trial with reference to the conjugal drama for which he was seeking a very far-fetched cause. She understood this and knew that he was impressed with the two quotations which had wounded her. She had then but to follow the marks which traced the way for her.

At the next cross she could no longer retain any illusion. Her own recollections served her. In the month of June, 1903, for the benefit of some social work, Albert had given a lecture in Paris on the subject of marriage, the success of which had been so great that he had been obliged to repeat it in the provinces and abroad. Now the leading ideas of this lecture were to be found in the notebook which Elizabeth was reading.

" On the Education of Woman — Double danger to be avoided: firstly, that which represses her too much and makes of her a weakened sentimental creature, a good housewife, a discreet and safe companion knowing little of her husband's interests, overwhelmed by petty domestic duties, unequipped to mold men and women; secondly,

that which tends to create the masculine type of woman and to destroy the unity of the family by depriving it of its master. In the first case the woman thinks of marriage as a matter-of-fact state, a final solution. She does not understand that happiness is to be gained or lost every day and needs constant care and lasting attention. She imagines simply that her husband's property is to be made over to her once and for all by an authentic deed. After that there is nothing to do but to allow oneself to drift along in an aimless life. Why can one not have the time that these women waste in trifles! Certainly the house is looked after and one dines punctually. But intellectually and morally the man is alone. A young girl who is not eager to develop her intelligence has no right to accept the hand of a real man in marriage.

"In the second case the woman accepts marriage as a means of developing her personality. She at once becomes a rival, who has all the advantages. The man who would realize his life in its fullness (and a man's life as opposed to that of a woman, can never have love alone as its exclusive object) — needs to find in his home, rest, security and trust after his work. It is the wife's duty to understand, to accept and to adorn the life of her husband. Her natural wisdom should uphold and not retard him. *Socia rei humanae et*

divinae. Marriage is arranged according to material consideration; once entered into, it is accepted as a fixed custom. And one fine day we are surprised to find that we are strangers to each other. An unhappy marriage is often made more so by family differences, particularly when the wife is attached to her own people and remains indifferent to her husband's. The carelessness and thoughtlessness of wives break up more households than their independence of character and their desire for love. To know how to live in a state of watchfulness is half the art of living. . . ."

There were only these general ideas about education, still somewhat incoherent, and a woman always hesitates to apply theories to the facts which underlie them, to draw a direct application from them. But a few lines further on clearly evidenced the intention of the lecturer.

" There is one who will listen to this quietly and passively and will accept with a gracious smile at its end the congratulations of her women friends without having understood a word of it."

Elizabeth, thus referred to, raised her head. She remembered this conversation, expressed somewhat disdainfully, but which had not been offensive. She had really understood only the pleasure of being on parade and well received.

Being too indolent to think and form her own opinion, she agreed quite willingly with all the lecturers whom she heard. But not being informed, why should she be on her guard? And what did these allusions, these omissions signify? Still, she did not understand. What were her faults? What reproaches could he make her? She could not be appealed to by quotations and generalities. Why not speak more frankly?

She took up the note-book again more nervously, on the alert for the slightest vindication as a warned sentry watches for the approaching enemy who has been sighted.

The continuation of the diary was dated from Saint Martin d'Uriage. When the summer came they left Paris. Albert, engaged in the writing of "The History of the Peasant," no longer needing to make a memorandum of other subjects, applied himself to analyzing his own mind. Whether he was growing accustomed to putting his sorrow into words, or whether that suffering, increasing, rendered him less self-possessed, at any rate, little by little, not without hesitation, however, he was losing that reserve which had kept him from revealing his inmost thoughts, and as a result of which he had thus far concealed them within his literary annotations or anonymous complaints:

"August, 1903 —'Nowadays the world is free to great souls. To those who are alone or to a couple, many places are open where one can breathe the fragrance of the silent water.'

"Alone or a couple? Where did Nietzsche imbibe such confidence in love? If one wished to experience the living presence of his thought, he must find solitude. For our thought is jealous, restless and austere. We are alone in our deepest emotions. Art, nature, metaphysics and the past which is ours to explore, demand that we be alone to understand them. In marriage it is necessary to keep this solitude intact. One does not give his intellectual strength to the joint patrimony. The cleverness of the wife lies perhaps in respecting this, by keeping her distance. If she does not do so she lowers, weakens, and finally kills it.

"Therefore, why this dream of an absolute intimacy, and why this melancholy, so poignant at certain times of not having realized it, when instead, we should rejoice in it?"

"August 10th: Walked with my little Marie Louise in the chestnut woods, on the side of the Charmousse. From her little faun-like feet to the top of her head she is thrilling with life. When she could scarcely speak she had been told to shake hands with people who showed an interest in her and said 'good day.' So when the

wind shook the branches, believing that this movement was intended for her, she politely returned it by holding out her arms.

"Just now she was running in front of me. Her curls, already quite long, were keeping time with her movements. She stopped to pick a flower, some grass, even some soil, and raised them all to her face. One might have said that at the age of five she wanted to possess the whole world. When she came back to me she said:

"'Papa, I love the world.'

"'The world?'

"'Yes, I love everybody.'

"'So do I, little girl. I have loved everything through that love of the touch of things which gives to all our sensations their real value. How it interests me to follow your development. My youth is dead and I am thirty-seven. But what does that matter to you? Enjoy yourself.'"

"August 15th: Saint's Day. I went to church with Elizabeth and Marie Louise. To occupy myself during the service, I opened a prayer-book which had been left in my pew. It was so old and dirty that I could have used tongs. My eyes fell on this sentence of the divine service. 'Watch and pray, for the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak'—

"There was a great deal in this upon which to

meditate. That is wise counsel for life. Instead of watching, we allow habit to put to sleep, to anæsthetize our feelings, to minimize and degrade them. To reflect is to keep growing in our inner life, which too often atrophies in the little daily occupations. We deaden ourselves by pleasure, instead of keeping ourselves in a constant state of keen sensibility.

"I look about me. All these good women are reading their service or telling their beads. The letter suffices for them. To reflect, to watch, is also to pray.

"And these other words which I have never been able to read without trembling: EGO SUM RESURRECTIO ET VITA. . . . "

"August 18th: How many women incapable of putting anything in its place are more worried in changing a servant than in real trouble. If only they knew how to be quiet about it! But the house is given up to their complaints. I would rather make my own bed and sweep my room as a monk does, than endure in luxury, that depression of personality which results in time from useless talk and petty domestic worries. We never entertain people with details of our clothes. So we should be unconscious of the routine of a household, except to note its clean, pleasant appearance, as we do a well-washed face. There

should be some mystery to this inner management. At that, it is better to speak of it than to neglect it altogether."

"August 19th: I love the unexpected, but Elizabeth detests it. Philippe Lagier came to Uriage to see us this morning. Naturally I asked him to stay to luncheon. For a long time I had not talked with so much pleasure. When we are together we give our imagination free rein like horses in an open field. He is clever, subtle, terse — has a vein of irony which excels in discovering the inner meaning of words, of theories and of humanity in general. Only he had not told me he was coming and we had no cook. It seems we did not have a good luncheon. I had not noticed it and neither had Philippe. And when he had gone I had to listen to complaints, as though I were guilty of some sin in inviting my friend. Thus, by too much care we lose our naturalness."

"August 30th: How difficult it is to keep one's liberty. For ten days I have been unable to write a line of my 'Peasant.' The advent of the Molay-Norrois at Uriage has upset our quiet life, so essential to the rest required for a long work. I could not ask Elizabeth not to invite her own people. The life we generally lead here is

quiet enough for one of her age. Now we are constantly invited to parties and fêtes. Her brothers, both on leave, are untiring, and give us no peace. I, who am considered self-willed, am so weak that I scatter my forces and lose myself without vexation. In order to concentrate on my work, I need the life of the fields, of the little walks in the mountains or in the woods — and some music and conversation. In the evening it is the odious casino, and in the daytime our hermitage has become the objective point of all the idle people in the valley. A lawyer, a doctor, an attorney may plead professional duties. In my case they make me put off my work until the next day. My home is open to intruders, even to the unintelligent.

"My mother takes care of our children at Saint Martin when we go out. Last evening I was alone with her, having succeeded in escaping a banquet of snobs. We talked until the return of Elizabeth, who was escorted by her brother Oliver; we had one of those good old reminiscent talks when one goes from recollections to questions about the unknown, and of things which have not been discussed since my marriage. Elizabeth was surprised to see us so animated at that late hour. After six years she does not yet know my mother. She will never know her. Were I to have the misfortune of losing her, I should weep alone for

her. Elizabeth's judgment does not go beyond outward appearances, and how could she imagine a superior woman under such a simple exterior. Her own parents inflict upon me their acquaintances and their tastes. I should continually show them my amazement and gratitude for having been accepted by them. But why, on the other hand, am I still sensitive to their favors and their compliments? They may exploit my reputation, if they so desire, and cease showing me off as if I were under their patronage.

"Heavens, how lonely one is in this married life, and what irony to pretend to be an influence upon one's time, when after six years one has exerted none on his own home!"

"September 22nd: After several rainy days my parents-in-law returned to Grenoble, and with them went all their set. I hoped to take up my work in peace again. But Elizabeth is already bored. I cannot accuse her either of coquetry or of silly admiration for fashion, or extreme desire for pleasure. Only she must constantly be amused by trifles, and this restlessness is unbearable to me. I try in vain to interest her in reading, in music, in the variation of light that is accentuated by the approach of Autumn — even in my work. She listens graciously, and is thinking of something else. She is not lacking in intelligence, but she

does not care to use it. She needs boundaries that can be touched. And when I wish to destroy them, she immediately builds others."

"October 12th: My mother wished to leave, despite my request that she remain. Without my making mention of it, she has guessed that I am unhappy. I am responsible for this unusual departure. In the evening I was talking more responsively with her than with Elizabeth. After the day's work this semi-activity of mind in conversation rests and refreshes me. Age has not diminished her passionate interest in vital questions. And she considers all subjects from a superior point of view, which is reflected in our discussions. She remained aside, occupying herself with some embroidery. She did not wish to disturb our intimacy. Poor Mamma, she did not yet understand that she was leaving me in my loneliness."

"October 25th: I was walking until evening on the mountain tops of Chamrousse. Passing through the chestnut wood I walked through a bed of dead leaves. I love the sharp crackling under my feet. And before returning, I allowed myself to be enveloped in the shadows rising from the valley. This isolation of darkness added to my own isolation.

" Autumn has changed the country in a few days. On the two opposite sides there is a color scheme which shades from pale green to dark purple, a magnificent bouquet which has all the melancholy of the flowers placed in the cemetery on All Saints Day. I was in the forest when the sun set, and for a long time I watched the flaming twilight between the tree trunks. For the stripped woods reveal a broader horizon, just as we see further, the older we grow.

" From that place I have seen many other autumnal fêtes, but have never been affected by so much dying beauty. On the contrary, I felt a cruel pleasure in crushing those heaps of fallen leaves destined so soon to decay. I was younger and Youth concealed death from me, perhaps love as well.

" I felt those forebodings of finality like a wound. I felt myself unsatisfied and filled with desire. It seemed to me that on my return my restlessness was visible on my face. But those who are near us never perceive the inner dramas which we are living. How should she guess? Last evening I was telling the ancient adventures of Pygmalion to Marie Louise, who always asks for stories, and who obliges me to steal from legends and mythology; as I proceeded, I met myself in my story. I, too, have asked love to awaken my Galatea, but Galatea has remained as

immovable as a goddess of stone. Have I not resigned myself to it, and is she not the ornament of my home? Have I not resolved to look elsewhere for those emotions so necessary to strong natures, and which nature, art, thought — and the entire course of the human stream have offered us? Passion means to live violently, and this power belongs only to love.

"And love, in ordinary life, cannot last. Or rather, one must cultivate it like a garden, instead of leaving it for each day, going, to carry away a fragment of it. To admit its decline, its slow diminution, the alteration of its quality, is worse perhaps than to lose it at once. The physical tie lasts the longest, with the laxity, the humiliations it imposes. But the intelligence, as well, remains subdued for a long time. Tired out, it can no longer defend itself. Shall I refuse to admit to myself this sham, these miseries and failings which, in spite of my work, plans, ambitions, hopes, and even this book itself, make me express my inmost thoughts, when I know I shall be neither followed nor understood? Parody of an intimacy which no longer exists, and whose outward appearances are preserved! Should I not at least use my reserve energy to protect my conscience? . . .

"When I got back, surprised at my late return, she inquired laughingly:

" ' Can you see in the darkness like a cat?'

" Her laugh was pretty and fresh, the laugh of a young girl. She was really uneasy and I knew it. My material comfort is preoccupying her thoughts much more than it should. Why does she not take keener interest in our harmony, which she does not suspect is at the breaking point?

" In the evening, as conversation lagged, which happens frequently since my mother's departure, she asked me:

" ' When are we going back to Paris?'

" ' When you like,' I replied.

" I usually try to prolong our stay far into the season, the peace of which is so favorable to my work. But in Paris, in this whirl which gives the impression of activity, in the external movement that distracts us and takes us out of ourselves, the hidden breach in our lives will be less evident and the coming of Autumn passes unnoticed. . . ."

" October 27th: Yes, this isolation cannot last. No link of thought unites us. My affection refuses to accept it. Our insignificant conversations are becoming unbearable to me. I try in vain to lift them from the commonplace. Elizabeth always lets them drop back again. She listens to me inattentively, does not interest herself, scarcely replies, or takes up another subject, a reposeful, personal subject. Even her voice,

much too sharp, does not lend itself to the words of a deeper life.

" I try to read to her, she interrupts me with trifles. Either one of the children called, or it is a noise from outside, which must be investigated. And if I get angry she is amazed, and I am altogether in the wrong.

" When I come across in history or even in the newspapers — (our animated epoch is not without it) — one of those manifestations of generosity or courage which exalt me, I turn to share my emotion with her. She is like marble to all things which do not touch her closely.

" She lets time pass as if we were always to live together, youth as if it were worthless; our love, as if we did not need to care for it. And her expressionless beauty irritates me as a reminder of my slavery. Sometimes, stirred by a dangerous longing for destruction, I watch for, I solicit one of those silly, ridiculous reflections by which so many women betray themselves and give us reason to despise them. But she is not even intelligent, which would release me. She allows her mind to remain fallow, as a beautiful abandoned domain. Her father, too worldly, her mother, too taken up with her father (and how uselessly!) did not teach her earlier to make use of her life. I came into it when the habit was already formed. This apathy freezes her heart and brain, as the

cold does running water. Defeated, I have no more strength to break that ice. What fatal blow would be required to smash it?"

"October 28th: We are leaving to-morrow. A last walk with my two babies. Elizabeth has pleaded trunks to be packed, so as to avoid coming with us. She has always some pretext for refusing when I ask her to go out with me. Physical activity is not pleasant to her. She likes to take the air only in a carriage or motor, or seated in a garden as long as summer lasts. Fatigue is unknown to her, that splendid fatigue which gives us an opportunity to measure our powers of resistance, to gain self-confidence. She has deprived us of that camaraderie and physical gayety which comes from fatigue endured together.

"I was telling the little ones their favorite story — an old Scottish legend, 'The Cup of Happiness.' Our own has a crack through which the liquid has all flowed, but it cannot be seen at first glance. Am I then obsessed that I am always returning to this useless subject? That sorrowful beauty of Autumn on which I have gazed this evening from the bank for the last time, breaks my heart. If I am not happy, I have never been more eager to be. . . ."

The note-book finished with that last evening spent at St. Martin d'Uriage. Elizabeth, before

taking up the continuation, wished to breathe, to stop, to rest. Her breath came short, and her mind was in a whirl. Thus accused, she wished to clear herself, and sought in this chaos of new thoughts to find mistakes and duplicity. But it was like a weight too heavy to lift, and to dispense with such effort, she preferred to hasten her reading, waiting to reply later to these reproaches in their entirety.

She heard the front door open and the guarded voices of her parents. She immediately put out the light, so that her mother should not be tempted to come into her room, knowing she was still awake. In the condition of fever and mental confusion in which she found herself, she could not bear anyone's presence. And in the darkness she brought into play all her overwrought attention to listen for the silence, which, little by little, came upon the house. Then she lighted her lamp, whose chimney had almost time to grow cold again. It was eleven o'clock. If she had to sit up all night she would read to the conclusion of these unexpected confidences.

In the second book Albert came back to Paris, seeming to have left his sorrow in the country. The little blue crosses were lacking, and at first one saw only history notes, short sketches of some celebrated men, of some session in the Chamber, some account of a short journey, or some idea

for an article. And then again the marks reappeared. Elizabeth, relying on their definite indication, joined the scattered passages.

"December: Heard Orpheus. Gluck both exalts and calms me. The emotion he arouses strengthens, rather than weakens. I need to hear that music or Beethoven's. When we were first married I asked Elizabeth to play sonatas for me in the evening — but she has only fingers. Little by little, by tacit agreement, we gave up this use of our evenings. In the same way we have given up our visits to the museums, our trips: she became so fatigued by them and her complaints enervated me. We now go each our own way. She prefers her quiet family relations to the bold conversations of my friends. If her beauty makes the passersby turn to look at her; if she is very much admired in society, especially when she enters a room — for she does not spend herself in either coquetry or effort of conversation, it is quite sufficient to make her enjoy in peace the lights, the gowns and her own success. I have confidence in her indifference and her loyalty.

"At my side in the balcony was a blonde woman, no longer young, already quite faded. In repose, her soft commonplace features wore an expression which evidenced only lassitude and boredom. By chances after the first act I turned

towards her. I saw her transfigured. The mobility of expression, the fire of her eyes revealed her deep emotion. She enjoyed the present moment with all her tense body and high-strung spirit. How pleasure can change a face, and how its quality reveals itself! I pointed her out to Elizabeth:

"'What do you think of her?'

"'Old and insignificant.'"

"December: To get out of one's life everything that can be derived from a maximum of effort constitutes a sort of happiness, the only sort which depends entirely on ourselves."

"February, 1904: The first volume of 'The History of a Peasant' and the 'Life of Pascal' have been brought out by my two publishers at short intervals. They are severe and passionate books, not pleasing to women. So I do not understand why I receive so many letters concerning them. The majority take no interest in them. Some few show a taste for deep reading. In the tumult of Paris, it is praiseworthy.

"I do not think that Elizabeth has yet cut her copies. As I have read to her in the evenings at Saint Martin some of the chapters with which I was particularly pleased, and as she saw the proofs, she has every reason in the world to avoid this burden. At heart, she does not like the life

that chance, not her desire, has fashioned for her. At Grenoble in a drab, dull sphere, she would have been happier. Life here is beyond her. Paris calls for continued effort, and the Parisians are forceful because of the keen competition which works to the disadvantage of the weak, who are soon discarded or crushed.

"The books which I suggest that she read, she either rushes through or does not finish. I saw her stop once at the last page but one, of an Italian novel which I had devoured passionately. She was not eager to know the conclusion. On the other hand, she adores the theater, for which I care so little; there, seated in an armchair, you have your own emotions served to you."

"February: Party at Mme. de B——. Why do they pursue me? Is it because I make no advances to them? My fame attracts them. A very naïve curiosity; as if the best of a writer is not to be found in his works! They suspect my moral loneliness. One of them said to me: 'In Pascal there is commendation of solitude. One might say that you know the rapture of it and that you despise women.' Desire clothes the expression of disdain."

"March: A slight intrigue with Mme. R——. I like the contrast of her black hair and her glistening neck and all the vital power

which emanates from her. But she is rather vulgar, as often happens in the case of these beauteous beings of joy.

"I have tried in vain to make Elizabeth jealous. In her opinion the world is divided into two categories — good people and the others — and we belong to the first, which is very restful. She recognizes no compromise, no distinction, no desire, no passion. But my thoughts are free."

"March 30th: Spring has come on its own day this year, a rare thing. In the streets and over the squares floats a delicate light, a slight fog. The trees are beginning to show their buds and tiny leaves. As one walks, somewhat out of practice since the winter, one feels a pleasant lassitude, as if carrying a burden of gladness.

"I look at the women as they pass, more graceful in their lighter suits. One of them, it is inevitable, is coming into my life as into an open garden. I am watching for her without settling my choice on anyone. A harmless dream which amuses me."

"April: Which? I am at times like a huntsman on the alert. And then I give up so futile a pursuit.

"My first love is the symbol of my sentimental life. I was fifteen and the young girl whom I loved was seventeen or eighteen. I looked at her

from afar, yet I dared not speak to her. To see her gave me happiness that was almost too much to bear. What more could I desire? She guessed my secret, and it was she who offered her heart to me. But I refused her, assuring her that she was wrong in believing she loved me. I could not admit that my love ceased to be a painful exaltation.

"When Elizabeth passed through the streets of Grenoble, I stopped, not to gaze upon her longer, but because I could not make advances.

"I find myself again in that state of languor and expectation, but without cause. My thoughts are quite fixed upon the future. Elizabeth, Elizabeth, when you came into my life, I believed the sun rose in you. Why have you allowed the darkness to fall? Our hearth exhales death and night. I can no longer bear that state of apathy which is neither sorrow nor joy, that listlessness into which I am sinking. Do you not see the danger? And if the well-spring of my mental activity, thus parched, were to dry up! A man's brain is a delicate mechanism. An awkward hand is sufficient to warp it. And it is because I am tired that I am returning to lectures, articles, essays, to all those rapid works which mislead us about our power of production. But you were not capable of giving me a different love, not to me, nor to anyone else. . . ."

"April 25th: Next week a history congress in London. They have asked me for a lecture on the condition of the peasant in France before the Revolution."

The second of Albert Derize's note-books concluded with this information.

IV

ANNE DE SÉZERY

There was only one more book. On the first blank page appeared this notice in pencil: "To be destroyed without reading," as a precaution taken in case of accident.

Elizabeth conscientiously hesitated to turn the page. Had she the right to go on? But Philippe Lagier, who was Albert's representative, had made no reservation in giving her the package. It was then expected that she should gain complete information without restriction. Her scruples, it is true, were in accord with an instinctive fear. She surmised that there would be less mention of her and more of another, and she regretted in advance the accusations which she had found, and to which perhaps there would be no further allusion. Finally she experienced an absolute reluctance to hear anything about this woman who was about to appear on the scene, and whom she utterly despised and wished to forget.

After trying unsuccessfully to conquer the ob-

session of her awakened curiosity, of her anxiety, she lost her self-control and inner peace, and applied herself distractedly to the reading.

There were no more crosses. The unfinished book was wholly consecrated to the intimate life, the new life of Albert Derize.

"London, May 3, 1904. The hall of the Imperial Institute at Kensington, where I gave my lecture on the condition of the peasant before the Revolution, holds a thousand persons. The government was well represented. The Lord Mayor, the Sheriff of the City, the Ambassador of France, the Consul General, a delegation from the Royal Academy were present. Poor little French peasant whom I lead through the capitals, how I sometimes envy your work in the open air and the fruitful sweat of your brow! The lawyer and the man in politics have the excitement of the game, whereas I, so frequently during my lectures, feel an impression of empty show.

"Later I was introduced to all the official society, and, of course, to a number of ladies. My imperfect knowledge of English complicated the ceremony. At the end of the procession, like those gathered at our churches for an important wedding, a young woman came up to me and said in French:

"'Do you not recognize me?'

"'Mademoiselle de Sézery.'

"'Yes, I have not changed very much then?'

"'Scarcely at all, Mademoiselle.'

"'You have made me ten years younger just now when you spoke about Dauphiné which I have never revisited — I thank you.'

"'Have you settled in London?'

"'Yes, will you not come to see me?'

"'To-morrow the Historical Society is giving us a reception, and in the evening we are to be at the French Embassy.'

"'I am invited to the Embassy. Well, until to-morrow then! I leave you now to your admirers.'

"She left me with that easy step which was characteristic of her, even in our little mountain tramps when I never saw her fatigued. Her hat, trimmed with a black feather, did not cast sufficient shadow to hide the glowing color of her light chestnut hair."

"May 4th: I was not able to see her until rather late in the evening. I scarcely belonged to myself. At table I saw her from a distance flirting with her neighbor, whose clean-shaven face appeared insignificant to me, despite the reflected honor of aristocratic family.

"She was wearing a mauve dress, that pinky mauve which recalls the shade of fading hy-

drangea. As when she walked, all the lines of her body seemed to enjoy their freedom. A strap which passed over the shoulder left its curve bare. I believed her to be slighter. Her complexion, a delicate flesh-color, slightly bronzed, as if caressed by the heat of the sun, harmonized perfectly with the delicate mauve of her gown.

" Yesterday, although I had recognized her directly — she is so individual — it was from a motive of politeness that I said she looked as she did ten years ago. This evening she is as young as at the time of my visits to the Castle of Saint Ismier. It is true that at Saint Ismier, I scarcely noticed her. With what was I then occupied? How interesting to find on another's face, after ten years, lines of having lived, and how consoling to recognize thereon the power of youth! However, she has changed. Down there she passed for an independent, bold young girl, eager for all extremes of feeling and thought — Now, I find in her more reserve, a feminine grace, and that indefinable expression seen in those for whom life has its depths — and whose confidence must be slowly gained — For her narrow eyes have long lashes to shield their vague expression: those eyes in which Philippe Lagier (who was mad about them) believed he saw golden flashes.

" About us were some of those Englishwomen, who, living in a country of extreme cold and heat,

have complexions only comparable to snow aglow with the light of the setting sun. She was not the most beautiful woman present, far from it, and it can scarcely be said that she was beautiful at all. I know another woman who could much better bear comparison — with the contrast of her black eyes and childlike hair. But one discovers her charm gradually. She is like those waters, whose clearness is at first doubted, because one cannot see to the depths. Her face, for instance, which is less youthful than her body, has a very mobile expression. In repose it shows the thirty years which she must have reached. Then the drooping corners of the lips, the bluish circle which accentuates the sad look in her eyes, the little wrinkles at the meeting of the eyebrows tell of years of struggle, of cares, of years of which I know nothing, but yet can imagine. When she is animated — she was talking to me of my ' Life of Beethoven '— those indications of despair smooth out and are forgotten. The amber complexion colors lightly, and in her eyes I too see golden points, little lights which are not the reflection of the lamp light — but come from a fire within. Finally, her voice, with its deep tone, to which a slight English accent has given a more singing inflection and which lingers delicately on the French words, as if, not having used them for some time, she hesitates to say them, that unusual voice accompanies

the words like soft music, and leaves a greater impression on the memory.

" Official receptions give opportunity to be alone in the noise of the crowd, as in the silence of a wood.

" There comes a time when all the places in our hearts seem to be completely filled. One cannot welcome a new face, even that of a woman, without a little wonder, and the discomfort of useless confusion. But when we find again after some years, someone whose real worth we had never suspected, and who was merely congenial, the discovery of that person, added to the attraction of newness, has the advantage of recalling our youthful past, sharing a common interest.

" It seems to me that I discover Mlle. de Sézery in this way.

" When she was ready to go I offered — at all hazards — to escort her home.

" ' If you like,' she replied, without showing any preference. Her face had resumed its almost sorrowful immobility. I took more time than she in saying good-by, because of my official position — When I left the embassy, I could not find her. She was already seated in one of those cabs between two large wheels known as a hansom. She called to me, and I got in beside her. On leaving Albert Gate House, we crossed Hyde Park, whose damp verdure shone in places under

the electric lamps which encircled it, like a halo, because of a slight fog. From time to time we passed a swift carriage, but the park was otherwise almost deserted. It was very late. After our very animated conversation, we were silent. I felt an impression of loneliness in this unknown quarter of an immense city, whose language I scarcely knew, which recalled my autumnal walks in the woods of Dauphiné. In place of dead leaves I was walking over years. We were thinking of the same thing, and she broke the silence with these words:

"'I hesitated to come this evening. I know why. It seemed that I have just completed a pilgrimage to Saint Ismier. It was so far, and again, it is so near.'

"I looked at her. What a strong effect the sad expression of a face which is pleasing has upon us! But she was loth to reveal her thoughts any further and asked almost indifferently:

"'You are leaving to-morrow?'

"'No, the day after. I want to visit the Tower of London and to see the National Gallery again.'

"A moment later, I added:

"'And to see you, if you will permit me —'

"'You will not have time.'

"'I shall take it.'

"'I am free to-morrow. I will call for you at your hotel. Hotel —?'

"'Northumberland. Northumberland Avenue.'

"'At ten o'clock. The Tower is open only at ten. I will be your guide — shall I?'

"'With pleasure. No one here understands my English. And you will lunch with me.'

"'On one condition. You will dine at Bladen Lodge in the evening.'

"'Bladen Lodge?'

"'Yes, Bolton Gardens. That is my home. I am living in a suite at the hotel. Have you a pencil, a card? Quickly, we are here. This is my address.'

"The rather wide street we were passing through — Bolton Gardens — was lined with private hotels with little gardens in front of them. The cab stopped. Mlle. de Sézery said 'good-by' to me — jumped lightly from the high step, and called to the cabman, whom I did not see, 'Northumberland Avenue.' She was mounting the stairs, when I lost sight of her.

"I was invited for the next evening to Lady Bartlett's, to meet the élite of English society. This forgetfulness of my interests and of propriety is rather like the action of a schoolboy. The number of hansoms was increasing. They drove between the lights of the sidewalks, the horses trotting easily with their light vehicles. In almost every one I saw a man with a woman in her

evening wrap. I was nearing the section where the theaters are located. In thus going about London, I was taking in impressions quite new to me."

"May 5th: I scarcely know any place more impressing to a historian than the Tower of London. The past of England, of blood and horror, remains there as its last prisoner. The twelve towers which protect the inner court and are kissed by the morning mist, resemble a gathering of black penitents who accompany a corpse. They shelter the crimes of Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VIII, of Mary Tudor. They have nothing with which to reproach themselves. Each has its tragic memories.

"I had special permission to visit Saint Peter ad Vincula and the neighboring cemetery, of which Macaulay said that there was not a place in the world more steeped in sorrow, because the horror of death is here intensified by the memories of infinite miseries and appalling destinies. In the church, which is too well restored, are interred Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and poor Lady Jane Grey who was beheaded at seventeen, and whose brief youth was constantly threatened with the scaffold. They showed us the exact spot where all three were executed.

"This visit gave me a kind of historical intoxi-

cation. With exaltation I explained to my companion the dismal succession of the houses of York and the Tudors. Suddenly fearing ridicule, I interrupted myself:

"'I am boring you, no doubt?'

"And I looked at her. I still see her as I then saw her: her face raised to mine; and her narrow eyes, only half open, increasing their light by contracting, like shutters, which, half-closed, give an exact shape to every sunbeam which penetrates, despite all obstacles. She waited a second or two before replying laughingly.

"'I was about to weep over Jane Grey. It is a pity. The charm is broken.'

"As we left the Tower, we found a desert — compared to the crowded city which we had crossed in going there. The contrast was startling. She explained to me:

"'It is Saturday and past twelve o'clock. All the banks, business houses, exchanges close at noon to-day. The weekly day of rest is thirty-six hours. The Englishman applies himself seriously to his business, devotes himself to it, and then earns his peace of mind.'

"'You like English life?' I asked.

"With what pride she replied:

"'I am free here —'

"I dared not question her any further. While we were lunching in the large dining-room at the

hotel, she told me quite freely in a few words how she had gained her independence. An old friend of Saint Ismier days,— married in London, had recommended her to Miss Pearson.

" ' Miss Pearson? '

" ' Yes, Miss Pearson is quite a personage here. Did you not see her at the Embassy? She has a boarding school for girls. But it is not such as they have in France. She takes only twenty-five select pupils in that fine house to which you escorted me last night. It is very expensive — two hundred and forty pounds a year. There are only young girls of the aristocracy there. The best masters in London come to instruct them. They ride and go into society. I was teaching music and French literature. My extreme love of Beethoven and Chateaubriand helped me, saved me. Now I am Miss Pearson's partner and friend. She is as kind as she is clever. You will dine with her this evening.

" ' You live together? '

" ' No, in England one has a better understanding of liberty than that. She has given me a little suite which has a private entrance. But we frequently invite each other.'

" To end her short confidences, she added laughingly, as she blushed slightly:

" ' I am earning a great deal of money. At least for a woman. Would you have thought me

capable of it when you came to my father's house to decipher our old charts for your history of Dauphiné? You made fun of my education then, which was quite scattered and broadened only by chance —'

" 'I did not laugh at you —'

" 'Oh, yes, you did — you disliked me very much then. Admit it.'

" 'You are mistaken. In any case you are mistaken now.'

" It was quite unnecessary to modify by compliments the relation of good-fellowship which we had attained the evening before, and which English customs so willingly permit. She had the wisdom not to heed my remark, and following her own thoughts, she concluded:

" 'I have worked a great deal —'

" I then asked her, not indiscreetly —

" 'You left very suddenly eight or nine years ago. And you went at once to Miss Pearson?'

" 'No, not at once. Three years later.'

" She looked at me, then lowered her head over the custard that had been served to her. But instead of taking the vanilla cream with her spoon, she mechanically put a piece of bread in her mouth. I watched her actions. Again I saw those evidences of distress which had struck me the evening before, and although I cannot explain it, I was convinced, with absolute certainty, that during

those three years she had not always had enough to eat.

"She had been obliged to travel the same road as I.

"'We owe no more debts over there,' she answered with a little air of victory. 'So I can go back if I choose.'

"I didn't answer these last words. I understood them better than anyone else. I, too, had known the satisfaction of paying off my father's last creditor with the proceeds of my own work. But for these inglorious struggles, I know one wants neither praise nor pity, and I spared her both.

"One need only cross Trafalgar Square to reach the National Gallery. My visit had to be limited to a few old English masters. I have quite a choice of favorites scattered throughout the world. The 'Musidora' of Gainsborough — that poem of limpid and voluptuous beauty, Romney's 'Lady Hamilton,' caressing Bacchante with the golden skin, blonde, lissome and impassioned — then a few marine pictures of Turner, fireworks on the waters, whose excessive light augments the darkness of the figures. I would make the trip only to see them again. My companion inhaled art as her native air. We experienced the same exaltation and agreed in our interpretation. I have rarely enjoyed so much pleasure in a mu-

seum, for it was deepened by that emotion which I knew she was experiencing with me.

"'You should see the English country,' she said. 'Then you would have a better understanding of our painters. The lawns and trees are more beautiful because of the dampness of the air. I have discovered that while riding. That is my favorite pastime. Only I am not alone and the horse does not belong to me.'

"My presence constantly brought back memories of former days. Her eyes grew dim, and that delicate moisture reminded me of eyes which become more expressive when veiled.

"It was painful to me to leave her even for a short time, before I was again to see her at her house. After a few hours one is generally tired of the best company, and it is an art to know when to separate, in order to leave a good impression. As our friendship continued, it revealed new depths to me.

"I was not to see her alone again. Miss Pearson and M. Portal, the French professor, were invited also. The latter is a very young man, distinguished and certainly in love with Mlle. de Sézery. As to Miss Pearson, I was prepared to meet an old governess. She is scarcely forty, and her very smart gown, though subdued, indicated a woman of the world, rather than the principal of a boarding school. After dinner she showed

us a programme with this heading: 'Royal Naval and Military Tournament,' and suggested that we go to Olympia where it was taking place.

"'To you,' she assured me, 'this will be more interesting than any of our theaters. I have a box.'

"So it was decided. As a mark of courtesy, I got into the same hansom with Miss Pearson, but throughout the drive she spoke of nothing but Mlle. de Sézery:

"'She is a young girl who is — how do you say? very captivating. You knew her before I did. She is sincere and enthusiastic. When she was introduced to me she was planning to go to India to devote herself to invalids and children. Now, from time to time, she still speaks of going. I have great difficulty in persuading her not to. She is not suited to ordinary life. Lord Howard, do you know him? No, well, Lord Howard, who is highly respected and a millionaire, proposed to her. As his wife she would have held an important position in England. She refused him. Lord Howard is old. M. Portal has no money, no family connections, but he is young and charming. He has adored her for a long time. She listens to him, but reserves her decision.

"'She listens to him?'

"'Yes. In England we listen for a long time to young men before deciding. In France you

have to say yes or no at once, when you are not sure.'

" As an unpleasant effect of these confidences, I realized that Mlle. de Sézery, to whom I had not given a thought in nine years, had required but two days to awaken my deepest interest. I was pleased to find the other couple waiting at the entrance to the hall, but I pretended to be particularly interested in Miss Pearson's conversation.

" This tournament — a championship encounter of cavalry, of batteries of artillery and then of marine artillery, was an illustration of English imperialism. Olympia holds ten thousand spectators. It was crowded. Hurrahs welcomed the conquerors. The sailors aroused especial enthusiasm. An immense pride stirred this crowd, when the military bands, the royal Guards in their red coats and enormous busbies — and the bare-legged Scots in kilts passed by. The bagpipes recalled melancholy countries and legends, but the piercing fifes shook my nerves like Rudyard Kipling's stories. They could be heard above the noise of the drums, upon which the drumsticks beat so violently as almost to burst them.

" The exhibition of a tournament of the Tudors' time was too much for us, and we went to have tea with Mlle. de Sézery. I invited the ladies to come to Paris. They graciously promised that they might come, and that was our last word. M.

Portal took me home and proposed to show me Piccadilly at night, but I was eager to be alone to write up an account of the day's doings."

"May 6th: At sea. I watched the coast of Dover as long as I could see its sand hills and forts."

"May — still: I am more content at home. I expect nothing, but my thoughts are definitely focussed."

"June 12th: No other woman has her walk, graceful and languid, nor her almond-shaped eyes, with their golden glints, nor the modulating inflection of her voice. When I walk in Paris, I cannot mistake any passer-by for her. This evening I was crossing the Luxembourg garden; as I followed the terrace overlooking the Medicis Fountain, I was surprised to recognize her, and in my astonishment, was allowing her to pass, when she stopped, and blushing, held out her hand:

"'I am pleased to see you again.'

"'You here, Mademoiselle? You were coming to see us perhaps? The Rue Bara is quite near.'

"I noticed that she was in mourning.

"Too candid to mislead me she explained:

"'No, I am going home.'

"'To your home?'

" ' Yes,' she replied, smiling, ' Rue Cassini, not far from the observatory. It is a little flat belonging to my aunt from Liéville, an aunt of the Breton sort. She left me her lease and sufficient income on condition that I give up teaching. Poor, dear woman, she chafed under what she called my " loss of caste." She is the only relative who showed me any sympathy in time of need. She offered to have me to live with her, but I preferred my independence.'

" ' Now you are rich? '

" ' Oh, eight or ten thousand francs a year. If I accept it.'

" ' Why should you refuse? '

" ' I should have to leave London and begin my life anew. It comes too late — at my age.'

" ' You do not think of marrying Lord Howard . . . or M. Portal? '

" ' Who told you? '

" Her youthful laughter contrasted with her mourning garments and the mention of her age. However, she gave me no direct reply.

" ' I never cared to come back to France. This return affects me more than I believed possible. It takes away my courage and determination, which were so natural to me over there. How we do feel the influence of environment! Here I am quite weakened! '

" I reproached her for not informing me of her

arrival. I offered her my services and invited her to lunch with me on the following day. She made me ask her many times, and finally accepted. Gracious and shy by turns, she is more irresolute, less determined here than in England.

"While chatting, we stopped at the balustrade which borders the terrace. Between two vases of geraniums, we saw in the foreground, the large central lawn and the flower beds, and as a background, the leaves of the trees which limit the view of the garden. The watering-hose was at work. Children were playing. An old invalid, assisted by his wife, was greedily inhaling the evening air, as though for the last time. Pigeons were flying above us and one of them lighted on the raised hand of a stone goddess. It was the delicious hour when everything assumes a golden hue, when a man's brain, after the day's work, is unable to resist the soothing influence of such impressions.

"I watched her going toward the Avenue de l'Observatoire until she was out of sight. However, I preferred her in London, struggling bravely and somewhat subdued."

"June 13th: In inviting her to my home, I had no other thought than to establish pleasant relations and to give Elizabeth a friend of stimulating influence, because of her active intelligence and the charm of her society. No, truly, I had no other

thought. Had she even inspired in me a more passionate interest, I should never have permitted this emotion to go beyond that inner sanction, where each one retains his individual liberty. I should have conquered my exaltation and bitterness alone.

"Well, after Anne de Sézery's departure, I asked Elizabeth her impression. I had told her that morning that Mlle. de Sézery, completely crushed by fate, had remolded her life.

"'Yes, I know she has been pretty,' she answered. 'But now she has too little hair and too big a mouth.'

"I had not noticed it. But I knew her eyes, her face, her figure. Why so much injustice? I was not seeking a detailed description. When everything has been made easy for us, when we have exerted neither effort nor will-power, why show ourselves to be so miserably contemptuous? There are words so unkind that they become fixed in our memory like milestones and serve to measure the distance which separates us from those who have uttered them."

"June 25th: I made no attempt after this setback to invite Anne de Sézery to my house again. We are near neighbors: I am going to call on her in the Rue Cassini. It is a little deserted street, hidden by the trees on the Avenue de l'Ob-

servatoire. No one goes through it, and one might think oneself very far from Paris. We are both going away — she to London, where she must discontinue her former life, and I to the country. Each visit should have been the last. But day by day our departure was deferred. In the evening after my work I meet her returning from her walk, and we both find relaxation in a few minutes' conversation.

" 'In England,' she had said almost at the beginning of this new friendship, 'I could see you frequently without any difficulty. Here, I do not know . . .'

" 'But since we are going away?'

" With no relatives, she was lost in Paris, as I was in my unhappy home life."

" June 27th: Little Marie Louise asked me why I no longer take her out walking in the evening."

" June 29th: Visited the Carnavalet Museum with Anne de Sézery. The story of the Revolution is an endless source of pathos which one can never exhaust.

" We have agreed that next winter I shall show her an unknown Paris, the Paris which bears traces of the long centuries and of great men. With her, interchange of thought is unlimited. There

is always a little embarrassment when I arrive; the first subject of conversation dispels it. She assures me that I make her live an intellectual life such as one does not know in London."

"June 30th: The farewell.

"'You will marry in England.'

"'I think not.'

"'However, you will marry.'

"'I am thirty. I am afraid I shall be unable to make up my mind. When I was quite young I expected so much life and love.'

"'And now?'

"'Now I demand more.'

"'Would you not come to Dauphiné?'

"'To what purpose? Go to Saint Ismier for me some day. You will tell me when you return if the château has not been repaired, if the trees in the park have not been pruned or cut down, if my country of former days is not made unrecognizable. I hope it is not.'

"My good-by was so inadequate. The feeling of separation crushed the words on my lips. But she? English habits have accustomed her to these companionships, to these friendships, which are less common, more difficult in France. As a result of my consideration and her natural candor, I trust that ours may last for a long time."

"Saint Martin d'Uriage — July. A letter from London, confident and calm, too calm, calm like the summer days that I detest when not a leaf stirs in the dry air."

"August: Now her letters come regularly from the other side of the Channel. The appearance of English stamps is accepted as a matter of course. Is it not natural that I should have made acquaintances during my last voyage?"

"September: From week to week this strange friendship draws us closer together, despite the distance. And I am adapting myself to accept its unrealized desires and incompleteness, for the sake of the interest it adds to my life. In these September days whose changing freshness is at the same time an indication of decline, I feel I am unfaithful to her, in forgetting her for the gentle fall of the first leaves, which drop off without apparent reason for the distressing peace of the evening. Unless it be that without my knowledge she is giving a new interest to these impressions! Our love is growing, so that it forms a part of all our thoughts which scatter to the four winds, and is influenced by nature, which, by ceaseless activity, awakens our emotions and then focusses all our power of feeling. Have I written correctly: 'Our love'?"

"September 28th: Her letter is dated from Paris. She has left England forever. 'I am leaving ten years behind me,' she tells me —' the most beautiful years of one's life which have given me the impression of years of more mature age. Am I an old maid or a débutante? I no longer know. I see my youth behind me and I have made nothing of it. I have lived so much, and yet so little. I feel happy, care-free and weak at the same time. From this side of the water I lost all my self-confidence, and I find myself unsettled. I miss the English life. In France you do not know the joy of the open air, of independence, of the honesty of friendship. So we have given each other our friendship: do you know that that means much, and is a very serious pact? I fear that you did not realize it, and before we meet again I want to remind you. . . .'

"Was the tone of my last letters unconsciously impassioned? My thoughts fly to her like arrows, and do they not strike her heart?"

"Paris, October 15th: I have returned to Paris to make some historical researches without which I could not go on with my books. I left my wife and children at Grenoble; they will join me in the beginning of November.

"No, I came back to see her, and I see her every day at the same hour in the evening."

"October 18th: We have had our first discussion. She had heard during the day of the remarriage of a friend in England who had divorced her husband.

"'Has she children?' I asked.

"'Yes, why?'

"'Because I believe children make marriage indissoluble.'

"Surprised, she asked me:

"'Is that a religious conviction?'

"'I have no religion. Catholicism, moreover, does not permit divorce under any circumstances. There are other reasons.'

"I explained mine to her, influenced by the interest of society and the primordial importance of the family. She naturally believed in the rights of the individual.

"'We must above all be sincere. A home cannot exist without truth.'

"In Dauphiné she had already condemned those unchangeable principles to which one cannot give expression to-day without audacity. Life has only served to confirm her desire of revolt.

"'Our feelings may change,' I said to her. 'Facts which are the result of them do not change. These facts have engendered responsibility, created obligations.'

"'They do not necessitate the loss of one's liberty.'

" ' But there are no free men.'

" ' Then is there no longer truth? '

" I defended this miserable lie, so derided, which insures men's peace in every society, because one is not capable of hearing the truth. One minute she detested me — I could not bear it, and I discontinued that tone of sarcasm which allows us to treat serious subjects too lightly.

" ' We have liberty only in the inner sanction. The chief aim of marriage is not the happiness of husband and wife.'

" She started.

" ' Certainly not. It is the foundation of a family, the child. That alone gives marriage a positive value. After the birth of the child life ceases to be a search for happiness. That event ends that period of sentimental restlessness of which Nature no longer takes notice. And if it is not suppressed, at any rate, it maintains a fixed course from which we can never stray with impunity.'

" As she listened to me without replying, I picked up a volume of Byron which she was translating.

" ' Be careful of these romanticists. Their bouquets are poisoned. They make the world reflect their point of view. They believe we have every right to the highest realization, and that our personality creates the worth of the world. The more unbridled it is, the more powerful it seems

to them. They add the decadence of their emotions to that of their minds.'

" From intellectual habit, I waxed enthusiastic in this defense of the social order, to which I have devoted so much thought and effort. She looked at me with her golden eyes, which can assume fleeting expression of unutterable woe — when they become like those of wild beasts in their cage: she said nothing, but her look disturbed me.

" ' So,' she said at last, ' if love comes too late, it is not worthy of a sacrifice?'

" I had not foreseen what one must always foresee with a woman, however intelligent: the immediate application of our general ideas to the present experiences.

" ' Yes,' she answered in her musical voice, ' the earth burns a long time with a slow fire. And one can always break one's heart. Is it not so?'

" These words were uttered in such an impersonal manner that any personal allusion was excluded. I could not discover in them the confession I was trembling to find. I was silent. In venturing into this discussion, I did not expect to be struck with my own weapons.

" Darkness, although not precipitated by the half-stripped trees near the avenue, was gradually coming on. And I carried away from her home an uncertainty, an unspeakable distress."

"October 20th: Nobody knows I have returned to Paris. However, finding Mlle. de Sézery's door shut, I paid a visit to my old friend, Doctor Heaume, who is incurably ill, as a result of excessive expenditure of mental energy. I found him seated, or rather strapped to his work table from which he no longer has strength to rise. Only his eyes are alive and pitiful. One knows from a distance that his cheeks are already paralyzed. With superhuman energy, he is completing his treatise on nervous diseases. Then he will die.

"'If I cease working,' he said to me, 'my trouble is unbearable.'

"His pain is an unfortunate marriage which has destroyed him day by day. On account of his children he has borne everything without a murmur. Yesterday I admired him: to-day I pity him."

"October 22nd: The lack of outdoor life has broken down Anne's health. We now go out together every afternoon. On our return, we have tea and she sings Grieg or Schumann for me, or songs new to me, of coming Russian musicians, Mouscorgsky or Rimsky Korsakof. Her musical memory makes it possible to leave the lamps unlighted until night has come on. In the twilight one is so happy. But in her dark drawing-room

her powerful voice is cramped, as is her soul in life.

"Paris is kind to intimate sentiments. One feels oneself as lost and free as in a desert.

"Apropos of some character in history or a novel, we often speak of love. I concluded by asking her in the most serious manner this question which was tormenting me:

"'You have already loved?'

"'Oh, already,' she replied, laughing. 'At thirty, my friend?'

"'That is not an answer.'

"'Well, yes. Does that interest you?'

"'Very much. Many times?'

"'No, once. And other times a little.'

"'Tell me.'

"But she immediately became serious. 'To tell about one's love means to give up part of it.'

"'Are you still in love?'

"'Leave me my secrets.'

"This scene took place in the Luxembourg Garden at the close of day. The girl had turned her head away. Before her and back of the trees, stirred by the autumn winds, there were lights in the sky. A roll of drums warned us that it was time to leave. I looked at the graceful, supple body which has already been embraced. How could I have doubted it? Her woman's charm is

so complete. I shall always see that spot where I have been jealous, so horribly jealous."

"October 23rd: I am no longer master of my feelings. In the midst of my work, I must let my thoughts go free — they may return wounded or tired. And I see myself going adrift.

"I did not seek complex happiness. She whose outlook on life I have tried to broaden will never know how she has disappointed my hopes. I did not ask the impossible of her. She was satisfied to accept her lot. But so often one does not know the meaning of that word: to accept.

"Am I quite sure that I am not seeking excuses for the passion which absorbs me? Elizabeth has held herself aloof from what is essential to my life. Had she not done so, would I be more certain of my heart? There is always within us something unknown which circumstances reveal to us, and surprised, we find ourselves to be on the borders of youth, richer in desire and weaker in will.

"I observe this ebb and flow of contradictory emotions. Does not each and everyone of them indicate some portion of my ego? Happy are those who realize unity within themselves and know their own limitations! I have left off the work I had in hand to undertake a new work. I am applying myself enthusiastically to it, and when

I stop short, I am exhausted. I find myself in turn more powerful and weaker. Exaltation is only a transitory condition, and without it I am helpless."

"October 25th: As each day passes, it speaks to me of separation, of absence. The restriction of our liberty will be painful to me. And the precarious season adds its restlessness to that growing in me.

"This evening it was so fine that we went to the Bois in an open carriage. It takes us a long time to choose the horses when we drive together — she will not permit the coachman to whip them.

"'Where are the English vehicles?' she asks with regret.

"We walked side by side in the Allée of Mortemart, near Auteuil. It is a road little frequented, and there the dead leaves had not been swept away. They were heaped up at the edges. As the wind rose, they began to turn about in a whirl and then lay down again. Those remaining on the branches rustled with a crackling noise. We waited to see them fall. When we returned, Anne pointed them out to me:

"'It seems as though we are abandoning defenseless beings.'

"And just then one of them broke off, hesitated an instant, then blew on my knees, as a butterfly

struck by death. It was a golden beech leaf. I looked at Anne and noticed her pallor.

"'You are cold?' I asked.

"'A little,' she answered.

"The sun had set without our noticing it. Dampness was rising from the ground; the morning rain had not had time to dry. The mist was still under the trees. The air we were breathing was full of malaria germs. Lacking a better covering, I asked the coachman for one, and wrapped it about her shoulders. She did not refuse it and smiled to thank me. She had never seemed more delicately charming to me. At the Porte Dauphiné we found a closed carriage."

"October 28th: Why did I speak? She had accepted my invitation to spend the day at Chantilly. To-morrow we should not be able to go. To-morrow my house will no longer be empty. We had lunched at the keeper's near the Château of the White Queen. The weather was so fine that we were able to remain outdoors a long time, and we had a good view of the pond of Comelle which continues along the Thève and the zigzag slopes of the forest. We could even see, standing out in the heart of the wood, the black tree-trunks growing more and more slender, the ground being covered with a mass of their leaves. However, they still retained sufficient foliage to

show us from a distance, like a bouquet, their varied tones of gold and reddish copper.

" I suggested that we walk along an unsanded path as far as the crossways of the Table. About her head and over her neck floated one of those white veils such as women are wearing nowadays, which seem befitting to a certain type of face, as sea gulls to a ship on the water. From time to time I watched her as she walked. She trod so gently on the dead leaves that they scarcely rustled. I followed the delicacy of her movements. In her long falcon eyes flashed sparks of pleasure. The sun was already setting in the woods through which we could see the horizon; the days have grown so short. A pleasant forest whose extent is not overwhelming like the German forests — whose order rests and soothes, instead of suffocating one, and which invites us to the hunt, to merry-making, to sentimental walks. A stag, crossing an avenue, looked at us fearlessly. At the crossways of the Table we saw twelve short roads comparable under their light archways to a dozen slender rays.

" Our return was much slower. I felt her nearness to me. I should only have had to bend a little to take her in my arms. But the expression of her eyes often seems somewhat distant to me. I walked more slowly and said to her:

" ' Why do we realize life so powerfully when we are together? '

" ' Because we are friends.'

" She understood immediately whither I was tending. Her face is so expressive that I read her impressions at once. She was overwrought. She tried to stop me.

" ' Say no more,' she begged.

" It was too late. She realized, even if she did not already know it, the place she filled in my heart. With teeth clenched, trembling and shrinking, taken unawares as a stream which freezes, she listened to my love. Was I mistaken in believing I saw her grow and brighten? She did not hide from me her agitation, nor even her joy.

" ' I should have interrupted you; I had not the courage. Forgive me. I have not been happy, and it is so inspiring for a woman to hear a man like you say these things, which have entered into my soul as the sun into the forest. I did not know how to resist them. Be indulgent with me — why have you come so late into my life?'

" ' Too late?'

" ' Yes.'

" ' I had forgotten. You still love?'

" She dismissed my emotion with a smile.

" ' Yes, perhaps.'

" ' Let us go back,' I said, somewhat brusquely. ' The train to Paris leaves at five.'

" ' We shall take the next one.'

"'No, Anne, it is better to go back now.'

"And I explained to her gently, as an arrangement of necessity, that it was better that we did not see each other again, at least, not for a while. I was amazed at the peace which followed my exaltation. She protested energetically, almost violently.

"'No, no, I cannot lose you. You have become indispensable to my moral life. Since I met you my dull days have taken on color. I do not wish to fall back into my old state of indifference.'

"The unexpected outburst surprised me.

"'But how about me?'

"'Cannot a man love unselfishly? I shall help you.'

"'To forget you?'

"'Yes. You will have no difficulty. In seeing me frequently you will not fail to see that I am no longer beautiful. A sincere friendship is not impossible. Will you not try? I ask it of you.'

"Her request was disconcerting insistence. By what strange and sudden change was she now pleading with me? I concluded by saying:

"'Let us decide nothing, Anne. Circumstances will decide for us.'

"'No, not circumstances. We! I assure you that we can.'

"During this discussion darkness had come on. Between the branches the sky was crimson. We had to hurry to escape the cold. In the carriage we looked at each other without speaking. The light which served as a background to the tree-trunks grew fainter by degrees, and the forest embraced us with added mystery. The wheels made no noise; only the sound of the horses' hoofs could be heard sinking into the thick bed of sand as we rode along the avenue. It was a dull, regular sound. Nothing disturbed our emotion. I took her hand which was still ungloved and raised it to my lips. It was frozen, but its touch was like fire to me.

"'Friends, are we not?' she said to me later as she left me.

"She smiled. I feared to promise more than I could perform, so I said nothing, nothing. The impressions of nature, of art which I have enjoyed alone all these years, that I wanted to enjoy alone, to gain a deeper understanding of them, I now share with her. She has broadened my outlook on life."

"November: I have hardly been out of the house for a fortnight. I tried to become absorbed in my work. At the time I generally went to see her, I feel as though fever had attacked me. No longer able to bear it, I told her so last evening.

"'Why do you not come?' she replied, laughing. 'I shall give you some quinine.'"

"December: Every time I come back from the Rue Cassini, it seems to me, as I enter my house, that I put on a mask or hide something I have stolen. It is a sensation of cruel restraint. But the welcome I receive dissipates it at once. There is no comparison whatsoever between the intellectual stimulation which I experience in my unlimited conversations with Anne, and the colorless calm which awaits me at home. I now feel the need of that thought and our excitement to make me know that I am alive. And I am growing accustomed to this sort of double life.

"How can a woman so blindly accept the deepest of all separations, the moral separation? After more than seven years of marriage, I am still amazed at it. She lacks curiosity as she does distrust. The daily round satisfies her. Just now I was studying her under the lamplight. She is scarcely thirty, and her expressionless face reveals no doubt of the heart, no personal thought. She can see in me neither a new joy, nor despair. I am all in all to her, but I do not know to-day how I have been able to please her. I no longer think of her love. Nevertheless I am so weak or so complex that her youth still touches me, and that my desire to animate her, futile as it is, is not en-

tirely crushed. I have loved her too much for her happiness or grief ever to be indifferent to me, yet I am giving myself with delight to the danger which threatens us. The younger we are, the less we can discern in reality the object of our devotion. We modify it, we recreate it, and later, when we awake to our mistake, we blame the object, instead of our capacity to idealize. We should know how to make use of the truth, which, although different, still has its attractions. But we do not forgive it for having deceived us.

"What I am passionately fond of never interests Elizabeth. She does not know or else she disregards the treasures of life. Either through thoughtlessness or indifference, she takes no part in it and narrows her life, when I try to enlarge it. We live together: she knows nothing of me and never will. There is neither discussion nor intimacy between us. It is the peace of the household, of so many households unconsciously divided against themselves. Children and the active life of Paris give to this secret divorce an appearance of harmony."

"December 28th: Marie Louise and Philippe are asked to two children's matinées on the same day. Philippe would try to get out of going to both of them, but his sister will give up neither. She is offered her choice: she goes from one to the

other, and as soon as we wish to carry out her decision, she takes it back. Her desire for amusement is not gratified by one affair."

"January 1st, 1905: What has this New Year in store for us?

"Anne is very sad on these days of family gatherings, and wishes to hide it from me.

"'One cannot help regretting Christmas,' she said to me with a smile, belied by the drooping corners of her mouth.

"Two or three English friends on a trip came to greet her effusively. After they had gone, I said to her:

"'Everybody kisses to-day. Is it not my turn?'

"She began to laugh.

"'There is no mistletoe, my friend. Ah, if there were only mistletoe!'

"'Would you go under it with me?'

"'In Paris your drawing-rooms are so small.'

"My exaltation of the Autumn has quieted itself, or rather has become as the red leaves inlaid in a Galle vase that I gave her as a souvenir. That which I thought impossible is materializing little by little. A lasting tie ill-defined and somewhat uncertain is binding us. I prefer her glance to her eyes, her voice to her lips, her friendship to my desire."

"January 2nd: Dr. Heaume died yesterday, regardless of so untimely a date. I saw him in his bed. He had regained his stature. His face was impressively calm, with a serenity which startles one — yes, startles and attracts — on features that have only appeared sorrowful and tortured.

"In reality, he adored life. It was his only faith. Instead of finishing his treatise on nervous diseases, he had begun a study of the development of the passions. He multiplied the reasons for prolonging his life and did not fear failing his masterpiece as everyone had failed him.

"At his side, his wife was weeping as if she had always recognized the rare force of that spirit now fled.

"Overcome by the realization of so much lost power, I went to share my reflections with Anne. Even our silence is the echo of our thoughts. At home mine have no echo."

"January: Visited the Conciergie together. One of her ancestors was killed in this court on the first day of the September massacres.

"'He once appeared to me,' she told me.

"At the beginning of our conversations there is always a short digression. Her indifferent manner keeps me on the alert; then I find again her

candor and her deep soul. It always requires time to harmonize.

"She does not try to convince me. I ask at all hazards:

"'Where and when?'

"'Do you want to know? It was in a lawyer's office.'

"'An extraordinary place for a ghost.'

"'Yes, they were advising me to give up my father's estate. He looked at me severely and showed me this wound. The dead always advise us to consent. They don't have to bear the consequences. At that time I thought that there were no useless sacrifices.'

"'And now?'

"'All sacrifices are useless.'

"Her golden eyes fixed me boldly as if she were defying me. I recalled her look of pride in London when she told me she had paid the last family debt.

"Along the quay, behind Notre Dame, she talked to me of her childhood, of her early youth in Dauphiné. It is a subject to which she seldom refers. Her recollection of our meeting is more exact than mine. She recalls forgotten circumstances. I was shy, unsociable and proud in those days.

"'A little absurd, is it not?'

"She replies gravely:

"'I recognized your superiority.'

"'What superiority?'

"She is seeking a definition, which is always embarrassing.

"'The passion to see clearly, but Philippe Lagier had it too; above all the power of never knowing a state of indifference, the wonderful instinct of all the innumerable resources of life.'

"'Thank you,' I said, smiling. 'You are too kind.'

"But she retained her serious expression."

"January 26th: It is all over! Our walks in Paris, our free talks at the fireside, at least for a time. She leaves to-night for London to visit Miss Pearson for three weeks!

"Something more than absence saddens our farewells. Shall we find intact on her return this rather diverse friendship in which we have known such rare joy? I tell her of my doubts.

"'I am half English,' she replies. 'The country is so attractive to me because of the habit of self-government one acquires there and the evidence of honesty in the ideal of friendship. Do you not owe to it this friendship of which you are speaking? A Frenchwoman would never have asked you for it.'

"'Is this friendship singular, Anne? I know

nothing of your life over there. Only, I am uneasy. Uneasy and jealous.'

"'Have you no confidence in me? You have the essential.'

"'And the rest?'

"'The rest is not worth while.'

"There is something in these words which leaves a deep melancholy. Before leaving her I looked at the ceiling.

"'Still no mistletoe?'

"She laughed with all her youthfulness.

"'Still no mistletoe!'

"'I shall bring some for your return.'

"'Not till next Christmas, mind!'"

"March 26th: When I saw her again two months later, I verified the presentiment I had on her departure. Something inexplicable has changed our relations. Anne is more reserved, and again at moments almost wild. Will time give back to us the harmonious peace of former days?

"Her letters, though long and frequent, full of details of her daily doings, make me realize this. Another feeling absorbs her, or with her love of independence, she does not care to commit herself."

"April 2nd: Little by little the same passionate taste for conversation draws us together. She

is exalted, and I find her again as she was, and all of a sudden her expression becomes tense, as if she regretted giving way to her feelings. There is a tragedy going on in her of which I know nothing."

"April 5th: I know now. And after the shock of my discovery, I continue in that happy state of languor in which one prolongs and deepens an emotion, desiring to retain it in the present, rather than abandon it to the past.

"I received a letter from Miss Pearson to-day begging me to use my influence with Anne, in favor of a marriage with that Lord Howard, who has asked her so often. There is no longer any thought of M. Portal. In England questions concerning fortune, position and family connections are of the greatest importance. Miss Pearson enumerated to me the advantages of such a union, which would place our friend in her proper rank. She appealed with authority to the confidence Mlle. de Sézery had in me.

"A curious mission which has upset me! However, I went to see Anne at my usual time, and without comment, gave her the letter. I still see the flame which flashed from her eyes.

"'Miss Pearson,' she said angrily to me, 'is hateful. She had no right to — Why did she keep me from going to India?'

"'You wanted to go?'

"'Yes, last month.'

"'Without telling me? Why?'

"'I do as I please.'

"This cruel suppression of our friendship offended me. I rose to leave.

"'So you will be able to decide without me.'

"She hastened to detain me. I have never seen her so overwrought, so pale. Her long golden eyes were veiled. I am powerless before their sorrowful expression.

"'No, no,' she said. 'You will choose for me.'

"Conciliated by her agitation, I made a gesture of despair.

"'Oh! I . . .'

"'Speak!'

"'How could I live without you?'

"And the fire instantly reappeared in her glance and lit up her face, which, in its changing expression, revealed her thoughts. I could not fail to notice it.

"'Never mention this marriage to me again,' she said.

"I had recovered possession of myself and pleaded another cause.

"'It is not a question of myself, Anne. This marriage would give you, if not the joy of youth, at least peace and that distraction which one read-

ily finds in a circle suitable to one's tastes and personal value.'

"'You no longer love me?'

"'There was no question of my love,' I said.

"'You would give it up? I am no longer capable of a sacrifice. Life has demanded too many of me.'

"'From you?'

"'You did not understand? For ten years. . . .'

"She was quite close to me. I had only to hold out my arms for her to come and rest against my heart, with her head on my shoulder.

"'*Anne* —'

"'Let us say no more. I am so ashamed of myself —'

"I felt her all a-quiver. How long did we remain so? Those wonderful moments had a greater weight — the weight of years. The April evening was prolonging its light, its invitation of Spring. Our love made us tremble together. When she gained control of herself she lifted her bowed head and smiled like a young, cajoling girl:

"'You did not bring the mistletoe?'

"I touched her burning cheek. I wished to touch her lips, to possess that which had betrayed her secret. She did not permit me. With a quick movement she tore herself away from me.

"'No, no,' she murmured, frightened, 'our love must suffice.'

"'It is my first kiss.'

"Surprised, I repeated. 'The first?'

"She blushed delightfully.

"'Yes, at my age. Now I should like to die. It would be the last.'

"'Anne!'

"Thus our happiness was tinged with melancholy. How should we now unite the past with the future? Do not let us look so far ahead. Let us content ourselves to-night in exhausting the strength of our emotion. To-morrow we shall make lasting resolutions."

"April 6th: Eleven o'clock at night. My home is broken up. I should never have destroyed it. Anne knew it. I cannot write of this scene. I am crushed. Shall I never see Marie Louise and Philippe again? Shall I allow them to be torn away from me? Elizabeth has misunderstood, belittled and lowered our love; so I have rebelled. She has reproached me for lying to her, and she was incapable of understanding or hearing the truth about our life. It is her desire. I am free. And this thought obsesses me: if Anne were not to give herself to me now that my love is the only thing left to me —"

V

ELIZABETH'S AWAKENING

The remainder of the note-book consisted of blank pages. Albert had given up his diary on that date, and the sudden silence, after so long a confession, spoke volumes. Elizabeth turned over the leaves till the last, seeking an excess of sadness with which to avoid reflection. At last, she lost all external pretext of escaping from her own thoughts. She looked at the clock: it was three in the morning. Her body on fire, she dragged herself mechanically to the window and opened it. Fainting, she sought relief, she wanted to call for help. The peace of night prevented her crying aloud. In place of the moonlight she had left, she found herself face to face with darkness, and went back to put out the lamp. Then she rested on her elbows.

She could distinguish only the vague slope of the meadows and the dark mass of the mountain on the other side of the valley. But, over the black arch stretched like a velvet cloth, countless stars stood out in relief. She saw such nights every time she returned from an evening party.

Nevertheless, this one was different — new. She inhaled its sweet breath eagerly. The air breathed out by the rose trees in the garden, and the pine trees in the park laden with a healthy scent, caressed her like the hand of a friend. She felt a cold delicate touch on her overheated cheek, and leaned forward to get the full benefit of its relief. And in her gratitude she noticed the different lights, the continued throbbing of the stars whose multitude had never interested her. One particularly, which was nearing the summit of Les Quatre Seigneurs rapidly changed color, being alternately green and rose like an opal. So the night, which, in her indifference, had thus far seemed only lifeless chaos, stirred itself, took pity on her, comforted her as a living being, as the only living being capable of lightening her despair.

But this same night, whose pure calmness she invoked, was wrapping in its coolness of closing summer, the love of Albert and Anne. By a sudden change she detested it, and called for daylight, less indulgent to lovers, and therefore less distressing to her. After accepting her desertion patiently and calmly for five months, she was now rebelling and wringing her hands, as she reproached the night. Ignorance, the feeling of offended dignity, contempt, no longer protected her from the jealous fury which possessed her. They were together at this hour — side by side, and too

late she knew the strength of that passion which had attracted them, the one to the other, and which she herself, by leaving him, had allowed to develop. This Anne de Sézery whom she had received in her home without heeding her ardent nature, whom she had never looked at except to find fault with her — of whom she never thought till then, except to attribute to her the basest of motives, she now pictured with her golden eyes, her face lighted up by emotion and the intellectual delight which emanated from her. She hated her — while she tried to be just to her. She was keenly alive to her suffering, as though she had just been deceived.

A cry which echoed from afar aroused her. It was one of those calls which the shepherds send from one hill to another: a prolonged and lingering note — followed by a sharp trill which seemed to mock her. It was repeated once, then again, growing more distant, less distinct. The silence added to it, accentuated its dual expression of mockery and despair. Was it the signal of a lover or the good-by of shepherd? Elizabeth, overwhelmed, listened for its repetition. The return to her thoughts tired her so, that she longed to find rest from the expression of her sorrow in any external manifestation, even in discordant music. But in the silence, she surrendered again to the loneliness of love. Had

she ever felt that love before, or, so aroused, was she experiencing it for the first time? It dispelled triumphantly, with brutality and certainty, all the contempt she had felt in the past few weeks, since she had known of the secret wickedness going on about her in the name of love. She even forgave Philippe Lagier his impertinent confession, for the sake of the warning he had given her at Grenoble, which now came back to her memory like a realized prediction.

"To love, if one sincerely loves you," he had said —"if one spares you every difficulty, every effort, is not to one's credit. To love when you are deserted, betrayed, forgotten, when your heart is trampled upon,— that is love."

Why had she then rebelled against such just words? Albert had trampled on her heart all that night — had she ever loved him as she did at that hour when she was opening her eyes wide to the obscurity of life? The morning when he had first whispered in her ear the words that every young girl expects and which do not surprise her, the afternoon when her fiancé had shyly touched her cheek with his lips at St. Martin d'Uriage, the evening she became a wife without even understanding how to make of her suffering an offering of love, none of these experiences had brought her memories, comparable in depth of feeling to this distress which was crushing her. Did she

have to lose her happiness to know its value? — And she had even lost it without understanding it. That her humiliation might be complete, she had to learn it from another love which was passed over her, like an infectious illness, devouring her with its fire.

The increasing coolness of those last hours of night did not calm her fever. The wind grew cooler, as it touched her face — She clung to the window sash with all her strength to support herself. So many and such overwhelming thoughts crushed her at the same time. Murmurs, then short stifled sobs from the children's room, made her start, listen, but she did not move from her place. Contrary to her habits, she did not go to the door, but let Marie Louise, whose voice she had distinguished, fight alone against her nightmare. She shut herself up savagely in her despair, and the last sentence of Albert's diary, so cruel in its selfishness, became intelligible to her. The little girl had gone to sleep again when she felt able to go to her.

"The cup . . . of happiness" she thought in recalling the last words the child had said.

She had held it in her hands — the divine cup — She had received it as a treasure which was her due, and scarcely noticing it, she had quaffed it unconcernedly, and had then allowed it to be taken from her.

How had she been unable to suspect what life could hold for her? She no longer defended herself against Albert's accusations. To defend herself meant to increase the influence of the rival. She preferred to be the guilty one. Yes, in her home, one breathed the odor of death, and not the fascination of life. Instead of a warm light on entering, one met darkness — cold.

"Why," she beseeched in condemning her past, "why was I not warned? I was so young, so simple and ignorant. Would I not have molded myself? Young girls do not know. No one tells them that everyone has to make his own home and watch his fire. They collect stones by chance, and the first breath of wind disperses their ashes. It is wicked not to help them."

But her memory unhesitatingly gave her the answer. She remembered all the circumstances, particularly frequent in the first days of their marriage, when Albert had tried to shake off her apathy, to give to her a little vital energy. In traveling, at the fireside, in the wintertime, in Paris, on the terrace at Saint Martin, in the summer, he had tried to vivify the past, nature, art, books, the fleeting moment. How much time and effort he had used to try to interest her, to awaken her passion, to increase the value of her days! She thought of this with tenderness and understood it to be proofs of his love.

"He did love me. He loved me before he loved her — When he spoke to me enthusiastically, feelingly, about his favorite works or things of the past, it was love that he was holding out to me. To understand life one must love it — one must love. I see it now. . . ."

She had built up that wall against which all force is useless: the power of unresponsiveness. Her resistance had been constant. To her understanding, to live meant to let live. Had she not filled daily her petty duties as mistress of the house, and her simple maternal duties as well? What more could she do? The bitterness her husband sometimes manifested, which he rapidly overcame, but which showed frequently on his face when he came home, had seemed unjust. Now she explained it to herself. The home lacked a living, happy soul to give meaning to the humblest cares; to the most trifling needs, diffusing that spirit of harmony, relaxation, peace, which allows the man of mental activity to follow the course of his thoughts, to gather them and afterwards give expression to them — not in muddled sentences, but with quiet authority, capable of soothing and comforting other people, and awakening them to a realization of the flight of time. So, by an exalted intuition, vague and pathetic — she began to understand the rôle that fate had assigned to her in which she had failed.

Her children had appreciated their father more than she had. When they welcomed him with their laughter, with their shouts of joy, and when they unceasingly asked him for new toys or stories, they were instinctively paying him homage. They attributed to him the power of doubling their happiness in life. And he himself met with only indolence or indifference, as if, in spite of his strength, he never had need of rest and relaxation. Year by year he felt himself more alone and unsatisfied. And other women, noticing that loneliness, waited upon him, and recognizing his superiority, tempted him. She had never guessed at this menace which hung over her. She had not anticipated Anne de Sézery. Without doubt she was the cause and origin of her own unhappiness.

She hastily withdrew from the window, seeing before her like an apparition, the most cruel passage of the diary, which entered so deeply into the heart of man,— that referring to the mystery, to the fatality of love,— that passage which dared to express the thought that even in happiness, one can never be quite sure of one's desires. She held out her arms to push it from her. No, no, it would have been a warning to her to be on her guard. Defenseless, she had been surprised in her sleep. But her defeat was irreparable. The other one had understood too well what she had

neglected. Reaching this last stage of the mad course that her thoughts followed without direction, she gave way to her despair. Why had she not been so cruelly wounded when she discovered her husband's treachery? Sorrow was like love, an abyss whose depths can never be explored. The thought which took hold of her with all its force, which was like a death watch at the side of a departed relative, instantly transformed her knowledge, but not her courage. She saw clearly into the depths of her own soul, but she fathomed her weakness and gave way to it. Of what value to discover one's mistake so late when all was lost?

Night was stealing away like a wolf. Over the mountain tops the first lights of dawn were appearing, all golden on a sky of green, a sky of a color, so delicate, so pure. The stars were fading away, melting into the fresh air as snow in the heat. Suddenly Elizabeth felt the touch of the sun upon her face which was bathed in tears. Overcome by her sorrow, she shuddered and put her hands over her eyes, as if to protect them from this unwelcome contact. The light shone through her fingers. All about her the garden, woods, meadows, all nature, was awakening. The trees, which had been so indistinct, were outlined against the golden light which was rising and filling space. In the bushes the birds were

welcoming the return of day with joyous song. It was life which was again coming into its own with a full sense of possession. She too was filled with a mad longing to live.

To live? She did not know how, she would try. She would struggle against her stupidity, her apathy, her ignorance. For herself? It was too late. For her children who should not be like her. But was it not difficult then to think of anyone's else happiness than her own? Timidly she went to her mirror, and beautified by the dawn as were the flowers, she saw herself, although pale and with reddened eyes, withal still so young, that hope entered into her heart like a sunbeam.

"I am young. She is not so young."

She tried to smile at herself but could not. The dawning day bathed her in all its beauty. Nevertheless, she trembled with cold.

"The day — Life — They do not revive me."

Turning from her mirror, she concentrated her mind, her poor tired mind, on a single idea — which became the axis of her actions, as a star that of the world.

"Now, yes, now, I know that I love him. And I hope for nothing from him but sorrow. . . ."

And she understood vaguely that this exaltation of suffering signified a new life dawning for her.

PART III

I

THE FIRST STAGE

A German legend, intended to illustrate that time is a mere convention, tells of the marvelous adventure of a young monk, who, doubting eternity, was attracted by the song of a bird in a wood near his hermitage. It was such a delightful song that one never tired of listening to it. When the monk returned to his convent he recognized no one there, and according to his recollections, it was found that three hundred years had elapsed since his departure. He had thought they were only a few minutes.

Elizabeth, after sitting up all night, was so worn out that she believed, on the contrary, that she bore the weight of long years. She was not prepared to penetrate so far into the forest of life. She had sought the way so keenly, that she was tired to death. Her health suffered for it, and she was obliged to remain in bed several days. Her illness was attributed to the treachery of early September evenings which simulate the soft-

ness of the summer, and are really cold. This enforced rest allowed her to deepen the resolutions which were to change her life. She felt herself unequal to seeing the visitors who wished to pay her a sick-call, and unable to recommence the worldly show, of which her new point of view showed her the emptiness. As soon as she was well, she declared her intention of settling at St. Martin d'Uriage.

"That is madness," her father objected, "nobody lives in the mountains in the autumn, particularly when recovering from a bad fever. And what will our friends say?"

Quietly, but firmly, she gave her reasons:

"To begin with, it is not the mountains. The sharper air will give me back my health and strengthen the children. And, moreover, I want to see fewer people. It is better in my position. And you will come to us frequently."

"To Albert's," corrected M. Molay-Norrois, who was surprised to find such determination in place of her usual pliable indifference.

Offended, she replied:

"It is true, but he will not come there."

"And if you were mistaken?"

"You will take me, Father."

Pleased to have proved in a word, the value of his paternal rôle, he no longer insisted.

The country house at Saint-Martin was opened

again. The children recognized again with shouts of joy, the wooden porches which encircle the walls. A large garden, enclosed by a hedge, separated it from the country road. It was rather a deserted orchard where fruit trees, wild plants and flowers grew without cultivation. On the side of the farm, groups of pine-trees, an arbor and a stream gave it the appearance of a park. Opposite the entrance gate, an alley of plane trees extended to the church, which, new-built, stands against an old Roman steeple with a stone roof, the last vestige of an ancient chapel.

The village of St. Martin is built on a projection of the slopes of Chamrousse. From the mountain, a sea of verdure, meadows and pine woods seem to burst forth into these scattered hamlets, as if to submerge them. Below, that is in the foreground, the Chateau of Saint-Ferriol, standing bolt upright on a wooded promontory, with a pretty swaggering air, looks defiantly at the fortress with its towers, gables and superimposed terraces. Some seven hundred feet below, the fresh valley of Uriage is stretched out. From this terrace hidden by trees, one looks out on an extended view which is bordered by the mountains of Drac and by the Chartreuse in the distance. As the bell nearby sounded the last Angelus, Elizabeth, who had just finished putting her room in

order, saw from her window the flocks returning, as evening came up from the plain. The peace of the country was so complete that she felt it in her heart.

The lights in the Casino and the hotels were being turned on. She was happy to be so far away from them. Here, she could master herself. An impression which dated from the first days of her marriage naturally recurred to her. Albert, on such an evening, had taken her hand to kiss it.

"See," he had said, "we are separated from the whole world. With my work and you, I want nothing more."

She had not understood the fullness of happiness which he hoped to find in her, and that this simple happiness must be jealously guarded.

Night began to frighten her. She feared sleeping in this old building, with its long passages and huge rooms, in which every corner seemed as if it concealed some unknown danger. She dared not inspect the rooms, nor fall asleep. For a long time she heard the tick of an old clock standing in the corridor, which seemed at every stroke to announce ghosts. She had never been afraid of anything when Albert was there. Henceforth it would require training to establish her courage and strengthen her weakness.

Marie Louise and Philippe had soon exhausted

the novelty of change. The friendship of the farmers' children, calling in the fowls to give them corn, the mystery of the barns and the farm implements, the heat of the stables, the joy of going into the fields with the cows in the charge of their nervous governess, only made them forget for a few days their motor trips and the children's dances at the casino. They imperiously demanded more refined amusements. Their mother tried to take them walking to Prémol or to the Oursière Waterfall in the Chestnut woods. But she did not know the difference between mushrooms and toadstools, and the untiring youngsters wanted to drag her too far; unaccustomed to walking, she became exhausted before they did. This dual inferiority lessened her in their esteem. She ended by forgetting herself in trying to read stories to them. The library at Saint Martin, carelessly arranged on white pinewood shelves, contained all kinds of curious old books, novels of chivalry, collections of popular legends, ballads of France and other countries. Elizabeth had often seen her husband glance hurriedly over them and take out a volume which she thought was chosen at random, but from whose pages, fantastic heroes escaped. When she wished to do likewise, she saw how ignorant she was.

"You don't know," said Marie Louise conde-

scendingly. "Papa knew. And then he did not read — he told us stories. It's much nicer."

And the impertinent little girl finished by saying:

"I will tell you the story of the 'Cup of Happiness.'"

How difficult it was to keep a resolution! After the sad exaltation of her night of awakening, which had inspired her so tremendously in her desire for change and sacrifice, she was now hesitating at little daily obstacles and struggling against them. She would never attain the object which she sought. What was the good of trying? Albert would know nothing of it. The irreparable separated them. He belonged to another love. Thus discouraged, she ceased all resistance and gave way. But she increased her sorrow by worrying, as one irritates a wound by frequent probings. And, at night, the sight of the lights attracted her. She was already considering going back, renouncing the decision made at a time of deadly insomnia. Only self-love still retained her. She pictured the ironical glances of Mme. Passerat or of Mme. de Vimelle.

One day, as she was walking sadly down the plane-tree avenue, whose heavy leaves are the first to become discolored, after the arrival of autumn, she accepted the invitation of the chapel, the door of which was wide open. She never

went there, except to take the children to Mass on Sunday. She tried to pray, but no prayer came to her — only complaints and recriminations against her fate. She remembered one of Albert's reflections: — although an unbeliever, he still recognized the motive power of religious faith, but denied the existence of that faith in all those whose life was not the proof of it, at least in serious circumstances. And he added that he had scarcely known — except in the case of his mother — that constant elevation of thought in the humblest actions which are transfigured by the expression of an inner joy. This made her remorseful. She had had no news of Mme. Derize since she left Grenoble. She always spent the summer at Saint Martin: how had she stood the heat? Why should she have been thus deprived of the country air and the companionship of her grandchildren? Why strike her, punish her for a fault which she could not even understand, and so strongly condemned? Elizabeth was ashamed of her forgetfulness, and promised herself to make up for it the following day, while the heat and light of the whole month of September still permitted it. That was her prayer.

Next day, she had the children dressed early. They were delighted to go to Grenoble. But when it was time to leave, Marie Louise looked complainingly at the empty road:

" I don't see the motor," she said.

" We are going to walk as far as Uriage where we are to take the street car."

" The car? " repeated the youngsters bitterly.

Spoiled by the Passerat motor, they had little liking for this mode of travel. Nevertheless, they were resigned. At the Boulevard des Adieux when they had to climb a dark staircase, they complained again.

" It is not nice, not nice," said the little girl insolently.

" It is all dark," Philippe added.

Children do not willingly take the part of those who are conquered: it is life that makes them do so. Elizabeth quieted them with difficulty. She was already worrying about her mother-in-law's welcome, and did not want to bring two badly behaved children to see her. Old Fanchette, who opened the door for them, wore a cross face, as she greeted the young woman, but when she saw her thus accompanied, she was wreathed in smiles. Mme. Derize received her in her sweet, gentle way, as if she had not noticed the neglect she had suffered. In this way she prevented any apologies and awkwardness. She admired the rosy cheeks of the two children who were holding back, uncertain as to whether they should obey their instinctive respect for age, or respond to the tenderness she showed them.

"Back again in Grenoble?" she asked Elizabeth.

"Only for a time. We have come to lunch with you, Mother."

Fanchette, who was listening, muttered between her teeth:

"Now we must feed them, the dinner-hunters!"

"You will fare very badly," Mme. Derize replied in her quiet voice, "but so much the worse for you."

"I have brought a pie with me and some of those little strawberries that you liked from the Chamrousse woods."

"Ah, you spoil me."

"Just as if we had nothing to give them to eat!" still grumbled the servant, who made no pretense of being logical.

This addition to the menu was very welcome. During the meal, Elizabeth realized, with a sense of details which only a woman can recognize, that there was a decrease of the comforts of life. She looked more attentively at Albert's mother and saw a change in her face, which she had not noticed on her arrival. She attributed it to the heat of a long summer, endured without once leaving the town, surrounded by a chain of mountains which seem to focus the rays of the sun on the plain. How wicked she had been in not asking

her to come up to Saint Martin, where every year she had enjoyed the good air! Immediately after luncheon, she made the offer which was in her mind.

"Mother," she said, "we are going to take you to Uriage."

"It is very late now," objected Mme. Derize, who blushed immediately, fearing that her words would be construed as a complaint.

But the slight flush did not color her cheeks very long. She added:

"I mean to say that the season is already well advanced."

"We have still part of September and October. Autumn often has many fine days. The church is only a few steps from the house. You will have the children. Come, I beg of you."

Fanchette, who was clearing away the table, was still a victim of contradictory emotions, and rattled her dishes. They might have asked madame before, but a stay in the mountains would still do her good.

Mme. Derize, somewhat surprised at so much insistence, was looking kindly at her daughter-in-law. She asked herself to what this unexpected manifestation was due. Had she been right to entrust Albert's books to the care of Philippe Lagier to be given to his young wife? She had blamed her initiative very much. She had

often been remorseful and somewhat afraid. Could her mind be at ease, and did she even see a light in the dark future?

"I shall be very pleased to join you," she finally accepted.

"No, no. This is a kidnaping. We are going to carry you off with us this evening."

Like weak, shy people, Elizabeth manifested a nervous obstinacy. With an uncertain will, one seeks only immediate results.

"Well, let us make up our bundles," answered the old lady almost gayly, understanding that state of mind.

When the arrival of Mme. Derize became known at Uriage, the entire Molay-Norrois set unanimously condemned Elizabeth. It was an absurdly sentimental concession. It would have been better to have continued to maintain her dignity. Saint Martin was little frequented. Nobody bothered to meet an old woman of commonplace family. M. Passerat, who had formerly had occasion to converse with her, took her part, but as usual, showed himself to be a coward.

"She is an educated woman, I assure you."

"Yes, a former post-mistress," said Mme. de Vimelle curtly.

Philippe Lagier, who had left for Florence the day following his distressing defeat, was no longer there to make them respect his old friend.

However, Mme. Molay-Norrois visited her daughter more frequently, and even made advances to Albert's mother. Elizabeth, absorbed in her one idea, showed herself to be unjust in not noticing these praiseworthy efforts. Another drama was being played about her which she never suspected.

The absent member of the family was never mentioned at Saint-Martin, but the thought of him abided there. It occupied the two women unceasingly, one of whom, the young wife, kept silent from pride, and the other from a motive of delicacy, feeling awkward even in presence of the children — in order not to violate instructions that she understood, but regretted. Mme. Derize did not compare the faults of her daughter-in-law with those of her son. She simply wanted to incline Elizabeth to indulgence. Orderly in her own inner life and very skeptical about the duration of illegitimate passions, she did not give up hope of Albert's return.

For a fortnight this strained condition continued. In the evenings after Marie Louise and Philippe had gone to bed, it became particularly unbearable. The two women worked under the same lamp; one, wearing spectacles and bent over a thick woolen stocking intended to warm some poor neighbor's baby in the wintertime; the other, very erect, guiding herself from a pattern

of some tapestry on which she worked idly and without pleasure. They exchanged a few commonplaces, then the conversation stopped. The stillness of the country at night was all about them, penetrating and quieting them.

"Why does she not speak to me?" thought Elizabeth, reopening her wound. "Albert considered her so intelligent, so superior to poor silly little me. She does not bother with me. I am not worth the trouble. Then why did she come?"

She did not know that the older woman was reproaching herself in the same way.

"She is suffering," the latter said to herself. "She would suffer less, if she told me her secret which I guess, yet fear I may be mistaken. I ought to get closer to her, draw her to me and comfort her, and yet, I dare not — I feel a weight in my heart, which is choking and oppressing me. My lips are about to open, they do open, and I remain silent. Why, O my God, have I so little courage?"

Elizabeth, overcome, was the first to make up her mind, as they were walking along the plane tree avenue, lightly crushing the dead leaves.

"Mother, do you know where *he* is now?"

Trembling with emotion, Albert's mother answered quickly:

"He does not write to me very often, and not at length. He is traveling."

"In which country?"

"His last letter was dated from Irun in Spain."

She added, as Elizabeth asked no further:

"It is on the other side of the Pyrenees, but quite near the frontier."

This poor sentence fell like one of those heavy autumn leaves, which the slightest breeze carries off. And that was all. The opportunity they had so long awaited had passed.

That evening Elizabeth did not go to bed until very late. She came back into the drawing-room after her mother-in-law had gone, and tried to read a book to cool her fever. To concentrate her attention, she put her hands on either side of her face. Half an hour passed and she had not turned one page. She was still reading the same words —

"He is traveling — he is traveling."

She recalled the uncommon trips on which she had accompanied her husband to Germany, Munich and Nuremberg, to Touraine, to the castles on the bank of the Loire. The departure was to Albert an exuberant happiness, a "joy of conquest" he called it: — he was going to take possession of new countries. In the picture-galleries, as he stood before a landscape rich in historical association, he would grow enthusiastic, explain, comment, make comparisons that she did not even try to grasp. Little by little this good

humor changed — he became distrait, absorbed in himself, and ceased to tell her his impressions. And their return was silent and unresponsive. Why?

Why? She had never inquired. Dull and passive, she asked herself very few questions, and did not try to live her own life, or even Albert's with him. What companionship did she give him? As soon as she began to question herself thus, a quantity of small forgotten details came back to her mind.— How much luggage she had always needed! And what importance she had attached to the thousand inconveniences which no traveler avoids! She needed so many things, she complained of everything, as if Albert could keep the trains from smoking, the rain from falling, the sun from overheating, the hotel kitchen from smelling, the tradesmen from stealing, the women from wearing big hats in the theaters, and fatigue from coming. The worst of all was that she had no curiosity. Curiosity is an incentive which lessens the annoyances of the trip for the sake of the pleasures which are before us. "Nothing interests you," he had said one day with a forced laugh. She now understood the mistake she had made in giving the same value to the petty necessities of life as to serious, vital, new experiences. But most women make this mistake, and that was one excuse. Of what use

was an excuse with a husband like Albert who had so often offered to guide her?

She got up slowly to look in the dictionary, then in an atlas for this mysterious Irun. She found it on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, in the heart of the Basque country. He had planned this journey a long time ago. It was a necessary voyage for material for one of his volumes on "The Peasant." There, he said, in the shelter of the mountains, the traditions of the family were preserved in their primitive purity. Some time ago he had suggested taking her there, but with little insistence, when he learned that comforts had to be dispensed with. She found in a Baedeker of Spain with which he had provided himself in advance, praise of the countries which bathe the Bidassoa, and an account of the customs peculiar to the province of Guipuzcoa. These strange syllables which had formerly amused her, now made her thoughtful. She, who had never, so to speak, exercised her imagination, saw clearly, on an evening richer in warmth and color than those of Dauphiné, a peasant cart at Irun, driving along a road separated from a river by leafless bushes, and on the back seat of the cart, close to each other, sat Anne de Sézery and Albert, who was covering his companion's shoulders with an old horse blanket. "Thus clad, she had never appeared more charming to me"— a little sen-

tence from his diary which was indelibly engraved on her heart. That woman would never take account of any inconveniences on a journey, or glance anxiously, with her much praised golden eyes at the changing scene.

Elizabeth fell asleep thinking of these sad pictures. The next day, she was vexed with the old lady, whom she blamed for her nightmares. When the postman came, she was surprised to find herself watching the mail, to see if there were a letter from Albert to his mother. One day a letter came, bearing the postmark of Paris. She was a little relieved by it, as if the intimacy which was torturing her would be lessened by the return.

The embarrassment which had crept in between her mother-in-law and herself increased like a thick fog in which neither could distinguish her real feelings. What comfort could she expect from this presence? Anything which reminded her of Albert irritated her, weakened her, and everything did recall him. Did Mme. Derize take into account the uselessness of her intervention? She manifested a desire to return to Grenoble. October gave every indication of being cold. The morning of her departure, succeeding in overcoming her fear, she at last said to Elizabeth that which she had been preparing since the day after her arrival:

" My child, have confidence and be patient.

Your time will come. It cannot fail to come. Only you must not find morbid pleasure in your sorrow."

But the young wife showed an expressionless face.

"I do not understand you, Mother. I have no sorrow. I never give a thought to it."

Mme. Derize tried to smile.

"You came," she said, "to see me, to hear news of him."

"You are wrong. It was not right that you should be deprived of your grand-children's company on his account."

Then Albert's mother, who had exhausted the limit of her boldness, was silenced, when Elizabeth could no longer keep back her tears.

"My dear little girl, why are you crying?"

"I don't know. It is nervousness."

"I know it is, and I love you all the more for it. I shall always be with you. But why make your trouble harder to bear? Wait with perseverance, but with calmness. Occupy yourself with Marie Louise and Philippe. They are your reason for hope and you belong entirely to them at this time. Be busy, very busy. Fill your days. And pray."

"I no longer know how."

"Go back soon to Grenoble — I shall teach you. Good-by, my child. May God keep you."

The two women kissed each other. Elizabeth watched the jaunting-car which took Mme. Derize to Uriage, until it disappeared round a corner and was hidden by a chestnut tree.

"Why has she gone?" she sighed, when she could no longer see.

After this departure her parents fled from deserted Uriage. Alone and made keen by sorrow, she experienced that melancholy, which, with the coming of autumn, arises from the earth at every step in the country, and which, until now, she had considered only as poet's imaginings. She understood now just what Albert had felt two years ago — the unhappiness of an incomplete or misunderstood life, so powerful to vivify all nature. The plane tree avenue, heaped up with thick, strong leaves, no longer hid the Chapel whose invitation, on that account, became more evident; but that was not where she chose to walk. She preferred the roads which go into the heart of the chestnut woods, and where, from time to time one glimpses the picturesque mountains. But she did not venture far because of her fear. Her children were surprised at her changed mood. She thought less about them than of her sorrow. In the evening when she saw the cattle come home and drink from the little pond, she hated this peace that the animals and their drivers inhaled. October enveloped her with an anguish in which

she knew a charm. It was a pleasure to experience pain.

Her entire household was conscious of this weakened condition. At last one day she received some news from Grenoble. Madame Derize, uneasy at not seeing her come back, wrote her a pressing letter, the ending of which revealed a power to foresee:

"My dear Elizabeth," wrote the lady, "this time of year and loneliness are not good for you. And you are not thinking of Marie Louise and Philippe. It is time to occupy yourself with their studies, to give them companions for their work and play. You yourself need a little distraction and social intercourse. Come to Grenoble, I beg of you. We shall see each other often, shall we not? If you do not come this week, I shall come and bring you myself — because I am anxious about you, my child. . . ."

She was amenable to the first influence. She hastened her preparations, to the great joy of the two youngsters, satiated with the pleasures of the country.

"All the same," said Marie Louise, "Grenoble is not Paris."

"It is not Saint Martin either," answered Philippe philosophically.

When it was time to get into the carriage, Elizabeth did not want to go away. In town, she

would resume her ordinary life: the home of her parents where she was not at home, and the trial for separation, with reference to which she had had several questions from her lawyer that she had left unanswered. She would lose that liberty of suffering from which she derived so much comfort. She would be obliged to busy herself with her children, to use her days, instead of which she had been giving herself entirely to her own sorrow.

When she lost sight of the Château of Saint-Ferriol which overlooks the valley of Uriage, and when she had entered the valley of Gière, whose sides were covered with hardy golden bushes, it seemed to her that her life was also narrowing, and that she was going far away from her love which she mistook for her sorrow. The children laughed and their merriment pained her. She was coming back to real life, in which actions count for more than wishes and regrets.

II

ELIZABETH'S DAY

Maitre Tabourin's four clerks, knowing that their chief was lunching in town with a wealthy client, began their afternoon by playing cards. That contempt for the public, which characterizes the small official in France, whether in the service of the state or of a private individual, prevented their stopping or hiding their game when someone knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Vitrolle indistinctly, unhappy in having no trumps.

But to the amazement of his colleagues, the junior clerk, Malaunay, left the card table to meet the intruder, to whom he bowed respectfully. They understood, however, when they caught sight of Mme. Derize, whose soft, blonde hair, lit up by the rays of the winter's sun, contrasted with the reddish fur she was wearing. In spite of the weight of her cloak, she seemed very tall. The cold air out of doors had reddened her cheeks. A black hat, turned up at the side, trimmed with a single feather, gave her the appearance of an

English portrait. Hearing of Maitre Tabourin's absence, she seemed confused.

"He asked me to come to-day," she said.

"But he will be back, Madame."

"Then I will wait."

They showed her into the little room adjoining his office. And the game continued. When it was over, Lestaque and Dauras, who had won, suggested another. The senior clerk prudently refused, and each one took up a document without enthusiasm. For want of something better to do they talked, paying no attention to the person who was waiting indefinitely. What is more natural than for a client, however charming, to remain in the waiting-room.

"How about our bet?" asked Malaunay.

"What bet?"

"The Derize case. I was the only one who bet on the husband."

"You were wrong."

"Well, well, we shall see."

"We know now."

Lestaque and Dauras thought little, but at the same time interrupted:

"How far have we gotten with the case?"

"Well," explained the clerk with an air of importance. "After the petition to the president, a verbal record of non-reconciliation was filed. M. Derize did not appear, and his wife

obtained the temporary care of the children, as well as an allowance. We sent the summons last October. M. Derize has not shown his intention and it is now January. The delays for conclusion have expired, and the case is written on the records to go by default. We have evidence which constitutes a written proof. The separation will be given *de plano*."

"Has anyone seen that evidence?" asked the junior clerk.

"No. Mme. Derize has it. She does not answer our letters, and the delay in the case is due to her silence. I suppose she is bringing it to us. It is high time."

Dauras sought the information which Lestaque enjoyed giving.

"And what is M. Lagier doing, M. Derize's lawyer?"

"What is he doing?" answered Malaunay, expressing envy and admiration on his mobile face. "He is flirting with his lovely enemy. At Uriage they were always together."

"Yes, but at Grenoble they never see each other."

"They are keeping under cover. And yet you can believe that Mme. Derize is in no hurry to get her separation."

"Well, what will she do then?"

"Ah well, she will console herself. Once con-

soled, she will become reconciled to her husband. It will be a household of four. That is the custom in Paris."

For the little clerk, dazzled by Paris, was much impressed by its free habits. Always on the lookout for something new, and with his eye fixed on the door, he had only time to whisper "Take care!" to them. The chief entered. M. Tabourin had lunched well — too well, in fact. His face was scarlet, his hair — which he had to dampen a great deal to accomplish such a result — flat. Instead of adopting the new fashion and covering his linen with a high vest, he displayed a shirt front, which he had spotted in many places as a result of his lively excitable gestures. As he was finishing his cigar, he assumed the indifferent air of a man of the world, for the especial benefit of Malaunay, who was watching him carefully; but the first word of the head clerk aroused him.

"Madame Albert Derize is waiting for you in your office."

"Ah, ah," he said, "she is making up her mind at last. It is time to get a judgment by default."

A last hasty puff, and then he disappeared. A few minutes later, someone knocked at the office door.

"Maître Lagier," announced the junior clerk jokingly.

It was he. They would like to have laughed, but the newcomer knew how to command respect. The clerks restrained their mirth.

"M. Tabourin is here?"

"Yes, sir," answered Vitrolle. "He is in his office with Mme. Derize. I will tell him you are here."

"No need to. I shall come back."

Then he did not care to meet Mme. Derize? Upset in their calculations, the clerks were astonished, when the Chief reappeared opportunely with his client. He showed every evidence of an unpleasant interview. Philippe Lagier, discovered, just as he was leaving, made a hurried movement of retreat and embarrassment which could not escape so keen an observer as Malaunay; but the young woman, after an imperceptible hesitation, came toward him.

"Monsieur," she said, "I should very much like to speak with you. Will you go a short way with me?"

"Willingly, Madame," he stammered confusedly.

What had become of that self-possession which had never been known to fail him? Why this emotion on so ordinary an occasion? He recovered his composure at once and bowed to the lawyer and his clerks before he went out with the beautiful Mme. Derize. M. Tabourin had

other things on his mind than to observe these fine distinctions. The door was hardly closed when he announced tragically to his colleagues:

"The Derize case has fallen through!"

"How? Why?" asked the clerks.

"Mme. Derize withdraws her petition."

Vitrolle, Lestaque and Dauras wore appropriate expressions of despair to fit the occasion. But the junior clerk dared to show unbounded joy and cried:

"I've won!"

The Chief, not understanding, stared at him and repeated mechanically,

"Won?"

"Certainly," explained the clerk insolently. "We had a bet on that case."

"A bet?"

"It is done in all offices. With nothing at stake what interest would we have in a case? Mme. Derize wanted a separation. Her husband demanded nothing — I bet on him. Nothing has happened — therefore I have won."

Leaving M. Tabourin perplexed, he turned towards his comrades.

"You each owe me a dinner at a restaurant of my own choice. Three dinners, what luck!"

The others protested. The lawyer, surprised, but greedy, hesitated a second between the desire

for an invitation and the dignity of his position. The latter won, and he grew very angry:

"Take care, sir. You don't treat business matters seriously, and I have already noticed your dangerous inclination to pleasure. Did you not recently win another bet at the Café du Commerce on the longest time one could take to smoke a cigar? The longest time! At your age, I should have understood the shortest. You took more than an hour to do it. It was a sufficient cause, you know, to dismiss you. The interests of a business must be sacred to its employés, and I will not have my clerks betting on the loss of my cases."

And with this speech, in which he gave vent to his anger (a good thing for him, as he needed some helpful exercise to aid his digestion) — he inconsiderately distributed some work to his mournful listeners.

Saint-André's Square is two steps from the Quai de la République, where the Molay-Norrois lived. Instead of going toward the Isère, Elizabeth directed her steps toward the park. Philippe Lagier, who was silently walking beside her was surprised.

"Where are we going, Madame?"

"To my house."

"Then you have left your parents?"

" Did you not know about it? I have taken a flat in the Rue Haxo, almost opposite the Botanical Gardens."

" Ah," said he, making no comment.

" I have been very much criticised for it. Still it is better as it is. I see my parents almost every day, but a mother needs a little liberty to bring up her children."

The park seemed numbed with the cold. Behind the houses, the young elms and plane trees reared their light branches and twigs against the delicate winter sky, so clear and pale. The water in the pond was frozen, and the ice had been broken in one small place to give a little black swan room to swim; but the poor bird, feeling imprisoned, scarcely moved his feet. Near Elizabeth, Philippe remembered the day last summer in this same garden, when before Counselor Prémereux, he had pleaded the cause of passion, against the Molay-Norrois majority.

They scarcely spoke a word, as they walked along the crowded streets which led from there to the Place de la Constitution, out of which branches the Rue Haxo. This square, symmetrical and even, surrounded by office buildings, was almost deserted, and the Rue Haxo was still more so.

" There it is," she said, as they stopped in front of a tall house of modest appearance near the

Boulevard des Alpes, bordered by the grassy slopes of the old ramparts.

They walked up four flights. She preceded him going into her apartment.

"There is no fire in the drawing-room. Excuse my receiving you in this room, Monsieur. It is our school-room."

It was a work-room simply furnished, with a large ink-spotted table; and its one window overlooking the trees of the Botanical Gardens.

"My children write their exercises here — at least, Marie Louise does, because your godson can only amuse himself as yet."

She appeared constrained, embarrassed by what she wished to say to him and could not. Philippe Lagier was conscious of it, but could not help her. Remembering the path at Uriage where he had known humiliation and shame, he could not realize that he was again face to face with her. She had tried to smile in saying "Your godson," which was a bond between them. It was a smile of such distress that he finally concluded to aid her by giving to this conversation the motive it required.

"I have had a letter from your husband, Madame,— from Albert. That was my reason for visiting your lawyer, just now when I met you. His solicitor at Grenoble, Maitre Randon, tells him that you refuse every month to accept the allowance which he sends you regularly."

"That is so."

"He was astonished and asked me the reason for it, and begged me to insist or to make them prevail upon you to accept it in your own interests, and if you refuse for yourself, then in the interests of Marie Louise and Philippe, who are in your charge."

After giving this explanation with a severe authority due to embarrassment, he looked at the young woman whose confusion he noted; either coming from the cold air outside to the warm air of the room had caused the blood to mount to her cheeks, or else this flush was caused by the awkwardness she experienced in advance, knowing what her answer must be. Blushing, her eyes filled with tears, she regained her breath as if she were choking, and replied with great effort:

"My husband has wrecked his home himself. He has deprived us of his moral support. From now on, I have decided to dispense with his financial support.

"I will bring them up myself. Later, they can do as they like."

"It is the tenth month. The lawyer has already received ten thousand francs in your name. He does not wish to keep it."

"Let him send it back to M. Derize."

"Albert will not take it back. You know him well. He has pride . . . like you."

With a gesture of indifference, she indicated that she had nothing to do with the disposal of the money. However, Philippe Lagier's answer, that allusion to Albert's unselfish nature, was secretly pleasant to her. It put an end to the unpleasant memories which the presence of the lawyer would otherwise have awakened. He replied, with a little less assurance:

"May I ask you a question? Do you not need this allowance, which is legal and which you can — which you ought to receive?"

She explained her situation with simplicity. She had received a dowry of two hundred thousand francs, the interest of which would be sufficient for her. She did not add that her parents had not yet given her the last quarter of it, and that she found her income reduced to six thousand francs a year. Philippe really knew this, but only said:

"It is not the position you are accustomed to."

The apartment in which she was living was certainly neither like the one in the Rue Bara in Paris, nor that of the Molay-Norrois on the banks of the Isère.

"I shall get used to it," she said, smiling. "It is nothing. I have no need to wear the garb of a martyr."

The clothes she was wearing suited her so well, bringing out with such brilliance the beauty of her

complexion, that he wanted to protest against this. He had lost the right to do so, and he therefore refrained.

"My children's education," she continued, "will suffer in no wise from this reduction. I have promised myself and I shall keep my word. See, I have already begun. I correct Marie Louise's exercises, and I am teaching her her lessons."

"You give yourself much trouble."

"It gives me something to do. One must be occupied with other people when one's own life no longer has a purpose."

She had risen. He believed that she was asking him to go. But she opened the drawer of a writing-table and came over to him to give him a packet, carefully folded, which he recognized.

"I asked you to come back with me so that I could give you M. Derize's note-books. I thank you for having given them to me. I have kept them a very long time, but you did not ask me for them."

He bowed without speaking.

"And here is the letter which had been sent to him and which I kept without the right to do so. You will return it to him."

Philippe, dumbfounded, refused the envelope she held out to him.

"This telegram belongs to you. It is your

weapon. You cannot give up the possession of it."

"I have no further need of it."

"But, Madame. . . ."

"I am giving up my petition for separation. Albert may do as he likes."

For the first time in this conversation she used her husband's Christian name. It was the only indication of her emotion.

"Ah!" murmured Philippe, who did not expect this new development. "Does Albert know?"

"I have just told my lawyer. His lawyer will tell him about it in turn."

"You will give me permission to tell it to him?"

"Certainly."

After that there was nothing left for him to do but to go. Standing in front of her he did not know how to show her his respect. In the course of this unlooked-for interview, he had constantly looked for an opportunity to ask her pardon. To the humiliation of his recollections was now added that of his inadequacy in a situation in which he most desired to use the resources of his mind. But there was another surprise in store for him. Elizabeth offered him her hand, and with a trembling voice, said:

"I also wished to tell you, Monsieur, that I

have forgotten your last words at Uriage. Give me your hand. You had misjudged me; it was my fault. A woman alone has to be so careful. Remain Albert's friend, and be a little friendly to me, will you? We shall meet seldom. I only remember the truths I heard from you one day, which have made me understand one's own contribution to one's unhappiness.—"

Philippe, bending down, kissed the fingers which she gently drew away.

"Madame," he repeated. "Madame."

And when he could master his emotion, he said:

"I shall be worthy of your pardon. Ah, if you only knew how I have reproached myself! Now I feel so much younger, so much lighter. Ah, one's own contempt is hard to bear."

"Sh!" she said, her finger on her lips as a signal to him not to continue the subject, never to speak of it again.

He bowed.

"Good-by, Madame. You will never have a more devoted friend."

When he had left, Elizabeth took off her hat and her furs. Her cheeks were burning and her hands frozen. The children, who had been out walking with their governess on L'Ile Verte, were about to return home: she would resume her daily work with them which sometimes made her so tired. She sat down by the fire, leaning against

the back of her chair motionless, in that position in which one seeks relaxation after intense fatigue. She felt a great need of rest — of not having to think of or do anything more. Darkness was coming on, but she did not light the lamp. Before her, through the window, she saw the snow of Belledonne on the trees, lit up by the rays of the setting sun, and delicately colored like early spring flowers. Kissed by the sun, the glaciers were melting, and yet, even from a distance in the clear evening light, their coldness was apparent. Despite so many praiseworthy efforts, which seemed to give power to her poor, deserted, young life, she felt the touch of death.

What courage she had used, in order to triumph little by little over her natural indolence, to accomplish so many decisions, even the generosity of which, once they were executed, could no longer sustain her! No reward, no hope would be given her. Far away from her, the one close to the other, Albert and his mistress were freely enjoying their love. However, they would know her greatness of soul, her pride, her new and difficult life. She would force them to remember. During that very day, had she not shown of what she was capable? Did Anne's biography, which had been kept with so much admiration, contain a finer page? This comparison with her rival in exciting her jealousy and poisoning her wound,

had given her a little energy. Her children, who came in in the semi-darkness to kiss her, aroused her from her torpor. She thought that Albert's mother would approve of her, would thank her, and, in this unaccustomed activity which had demanded of her sluggish youth a display of strength, the use of which she now understood, she found, despite so many causes for despair, that wonderful peace in fatigue which healthful exercise gives to the body. And this new sensation came as a surprise and a relief to her.

III

MADAME MOLAY-NORROIS

Elizabeth had resolved after her return to Grenoble, not to be at home to visitors in her new house. But on the advice of her parents, to her great surprise sanctioned by her mother-in-law as well, she had decided to have a reception-day. In Paris, preferring her own acquaintances, she had taken little trouble to keep up connections useful or pleasant to her husband. Little by little Albert had left her free and had withdrawn from society. But now the sacredness of social life was impressed on her by the Molay-Norrois, and Mme. Derize begged her to avoid solitude.

"I am confident," she said, "that the future will brighten for you. But you must arrange a normal existence for yourself. It is not always a good thing to live with one's memories."

"But how about you?"

"Oh! I am quite old and the past suffices for me. Marie Louise and Philippe will have friends whose parents you will know. You have given me great happiness in renouncing your separation."

"Nobody knows of it as yet."

"Since you bear Albert's name it is right that the sympathy and esteem of the public should go to you. If God wills that some day you shall take up your life toegther . . ."

"I shall never live with Albert again. He has caused me too much unhappiness. . . ."

After the protest, she decided, not from personal conviction, but because of weakness and the need of distraction, to take the advice of Mme. Derize. One of her school friends, Blanche Servin, of whom she had lost track, had married an ordinary clerk, M. Vernier; and knowing that Elizabeth was unhappy, this friend plucked up courage to come to see her, which she would never have cared to do before, because of the difference in their positions. She turned out to be one of those women, who at first glance, seem very insignificant, and find time to devote to good work because they never think about themselves. Elizabeth was surprised at her tact, her radiant sweetness, the gentle gayety she displayed, despite all the difficulties and troubles she had known in raising a large family. What determination she had developed in so commonplace a lot! She promised to return her call, and to bring Marie Louise and Philippe with her.

Then, now and again, the friends of the Molay-Norrois appeared. Mme. Passerat, always ac-

tive and in a hurry, came first, accompanied by the old Counselor Prémereux, an admirer over whom she held the whip-hand, since M. Molay-Norrois, the victim of an attack of gout, found himself obliged to stay in his room. With her effusive graciousness she looked about the place and ran to the window to enjoy the view.

"Trees, trees of every kind. And Belledonne on the horizon. It is wonderful! But how pretty you look, my dear! You are right always to get your clothes in Paris."

"It is a dress from last winter," explained Elizabeth, whose toilette contrasted with the shabby furniture. "I had it altered here."

Mme. Passerat burst out laughing.

"What an innocent child! One does not mention such things."

The young woman, determined to meet all advances coldly, was nevertheless obliged to recognize her visitor's charming ease of manner. But, having exhausted her ordinary subjects of conversation, in order to gain a confidence which was being withheld, she let Elizabeth understand, with a condescending air, that she knew all about the withdrawal of the petition. Certainly M. Tabourin's office kept no secrets from anyone.

"Yes," she added, "your settling here is only temporary. You are thinking of going back to Paris soon."

"I think not, Madame," answered Elizabeth, who drew herself to her full height at this intrusion into her private life.

"Yes, you will, you will. Your father will be delighted. He has such good judgment, your dear father, such great experience. Listen to me, my child, brilliant surroundings, the movement and glitter of a drawing-room are necessary for the duration of a passion. Men are so vain. Your husband has withdrawn from society. It is a foolish whim which will not last."

"You know better whether it can last, Madame. But you must allow me to be the best judge of my own case," said Elizabeth.

She was surprised at herself in giving utterance to this sentence of double meaning which concluded with a half threat. Mme. Passerat, disconcerted, hesitating at the allusion, was on her guard, and thought: "Still waters run deep."

Mmes. de Vimelle and Bonnard-Basson, intimate because of their husbands' business association, drove together to the out-of-the-way Rue Haxo. Not so fashionable as Mme. Passerat, and therefore given to petty provincial competition, they noticed with silent satisfaction, the condition of the house and the number of storeys. They had hardly entered, when, while conversing, they made an inventory of the furniture, and un-

pleasantly estimated the value of Elizabeth's dress, which bore the hallmark of its Parisian origin, and was set off in so modest a frame, a contrast which they considered in very bad taste. After the usual exchange of compliments, Mme. de Vimelle smirked, while her friend tried to regain her breath, which she had lost in coming up the stairs.

"We have heard about your new decision, Madame. It is quite right. You have defeated your adversary's plans."

"What plan? What decision?" asked Elizabeth, puzzled.

"Grenoble is a small town where one knows everything that is going on."

"Everything," said Mme. Bonnard-Basson promptly, to emphasize that she had nothing to hide.

"But what?"

"Well, your husband changed from separation to divorce in order to marry the co-respondent. You cut the grass from under his feet by giving up your case."

"I had never thought of that."

And Elizabeth, indignant, asked herself by what right they penetrated so impertinently into the sorrows and doubts of her soul. And she let them know it, not without firmness. Mme. de Vimelle took it upon herself to reply:

"Heavens, Madame, a divorce is like a book or a crime — it belongs to the public."

After the ladies had gone, Elizabeth, who had made enemies of them, compared them to Blanche Vernier who was far from brilliant, and who had not mentioned her equivocal position, but had so spontaneously offered her a sincere, loyal, active friendship. From actual experience, day by day, she saw externalities crumble, and the truth which demands a cruel apprenticeship to be understood, appear.

She expected no one else. She had invited Mme. de Crozet, whose children were friends of Marie Louise and Philippe, but she had expressed her regrets in a short note, which was an evident refusal to have anything to do with a woman who was separated from her husband. That first insult was very painful to her. Did it forbode others?

It was already late when her mother came to see her. She had not consulted her about relinquishing her rights and felt remorseful. It was a very general case in family histories: — the wife, after her marriage, continues to remain under her parents' direction, and particularly under that of her mother, even when they do not seek to exert that influence. She asks their advice on every occasion. Then, one fine day, she asserts herself, paying no attention to the pain-

ful astonishment, which so radical a change cannot fail to provoke. Elizabeth, after her despair at Uriage, took a long time to release herself. Feeling she was not understood, and realizing that she had been ill-advised in the past, she had without consideration taken her freedom. Made self-centered by sorrow, as happens with weak natures, she did not notice the grief of other people. Mme. Molay-Norrois had suffered from her daughter's reserve, particularly painful to her, but had not been able to do anything but burden her with impolitic advice; so the gulf between them had widened day by day. They exchanged only a few insignificant words like feeble calls which cannot be heard across a ravine.

Elizabeth inquired for her father's health.

"He is bored in bed," explained her mother. "He is very impatient. I read to him. He needs so much distraction — he is so unaccustomed to suffering!"

What were they going to say, now that they had touched upon their only common interest? Mme. Molay-Norrois hesitated then, timidly ventured, looking down on the floor to lessen her seeming boldness.

"So you . . . you are resigned . . . as well?"

Quite taken aback by this last word which might have been accidental, referring without

definite application to similar cases, and merely said to fill in the silence, Elizabeth looked at her mother attentively. At one glance, she noticed on the face, still youthful, patient and smiling, traces of suffering, which she would have been unable to see several months before. She had no doubts — she could have no doubts — as to her discovery.

" Mother," she sighed affectionately, throwing herself into her arms.

The two women remained for a long time in each other's embrace. Unhappiness restored their intimacy of former days, when one of them was only a little girl.

Without a word they understood each other. Daughterly modesty prevented Elizabeth, who remembered her bitterness at Uriage, from questioning her mother, and she asked herself how long must she have lived with this terrible secret. What strangers we are to one another! How little we can know of the deepest anguish of beings who are dearest to us, and how difficult it is to see and to understand! To perform a duty is easier than to know it, and no one directs or perfects in himself this delicate and complex art of knowledge. Mme. Molay-Norrois was the first to feel the necessity of an explanation.

" My dear, I am finding you again. I thought I had lost you."

"Oh, Mother!"

"I did not understand why you were estranged from me. But I blamed myself."

"Blamed yourself?"

"Yes, when you came back to us from Paris . . . after Albert's . . . deception, I did not admit for a moment that your separation was not inevitable. I aroused you against him, instead of calming you. I still retained, at my age, so many illusions about happiness, about life! Now, I have no more, you understand. I had thought so little about those things. Forgive my mistake."

Elizabeth covered the poor weeping eyes with kisses. In a low voice she asked:

"Is it a long time . . . since you found out?"

"The last day at Uriage. And you knew then?"

"Yes."

"You did not tell me — you went away from me."

"Not from you, Mother — from father. How could I have spoken?"

"You are right."

She hesitated a moment, then wished to defend herself, although she had not been accused.

"It is too late. After thirty-two years of marriage. On account of you and your brothers, for the sake of their careers, my hands are tied.

What should I have done? I said nothing. He did not even notice it. He is somewhat selfish. Still I have suffered terribly. My ideals are shattered."

"Dear Mother, let us say no more. Lean on me. Let me soothe you, as if I were your mother."

"No. Listen. You must know about it. He is not entirely to blame. When he was in the army and his post was changed, I insisted that he resign. He had nothing to do, and was very attractive. I wanted to live — I did wrong. We are often responsible for the sorrows which crush us."

"Oh, you did not deserve that grief."

"Now he is ill and old age is coming on. It is sad to think, but old age and illness are working in my behalf. *She* comes less willingly. He prefers my care. That is something."

She tried unsuccessfully to smile. Elizabeth continued to hold her hands, not growing weary in observing on the poor, aging face, traces of distress, which seemed living reproaches to her. In spite of her affection, she had for some months misjudged her mother, who was giving her a lesson in endurance, silence, self-denial and resignation. But she did not wish to be resigned. When asked what she thought of doing, she answered:

"I do not know."

"You are still his wife. If he came back to you, would you receive him?"

"I do not think so."

"Well, what are you expecting?"

Elizabeth let her arms fall.

"I am not making any further plans. One day I hope, another, I rebel — or I lose hold of myself. I have not yet chosen my path."

"Dear little girl, there is only one for us. I see it quite clearly now. And I have turned you away from it."

"Oh, it's not you, Mother. But there is another course, that of a new life without any links with the past. I do not wish it. It is of no use to women like us."

"Well?"

"There must be a third."

"Which?"

"I am looking for it."

Elizabeth passed the winter in alternate states of energy and weakness. Her weakness was still the strength of other beings who were dependent upon her. Did she not have to amuse her father, to comfort her mother, to keep in check Marie Louise's rich and exuberant nature, and to develop that of Philippe, less active? All these

cares occupied her, filled her days and prevented her from feeling her loneliness too much, but they did not satisfy, and sometimes crushed her. At night she went to bed in despair, giving herself up to sorrow more completely than ever to love, and on awakening, she again found that despair. A visit to Mme. Derize, who welcomed her affectionately, gave her valuable, practical advice and made her turn to God, restored her patience for a while. The old lady had found a way of speaking to her favorably of Albert: it was of Albert as a child that she told her all sorts of forgotten episodes, so as to give her a memory of him less bitter than that she had. Tormented one afternoon, as she was walking with Marie Louise, who constantly demanded stories, Elizabeth tried to repeat one of those childish tales, and was soon drawn, almost in spite of herself, to speak to the children of their father.

One day, as she was crossing the Place de la Constitution with her little girl, she suggested taking her into the museum:

"What is a museum?"

"You will see pictures which represent figures or landscapes."

"Oh, yes, let's go in."

In the first room, Marie Louise stood right in front of the dazzling portrait of Mlle. de Barral,

whom Largillière has depicted laughing, in a magnificent red dress, as conspicuous as a sign post.

"Look at this beautiful lady, Mamma."

Elizabeth instantly recalled her own remarks to Albert, as he selected for her, in this same museum, the pictures which could mold her taste. She found the old man, by Fragonard, which was to be found beside the Largillière, and studied it attentively. She had no difficulty in interesting herself in this lined face, which sums up the whole life story of a hard-working peasant, a dreamer, and somewhat of a drunkard. How easy to understand these works of art, which one thinks are only admired by a select few! It was only necessary to compare them with reality, to consider them a more exact transposition in a better frame, of the too vast and complicated panorama of life. Albert's remarks, which she recalled, deepened her vision. She drew Marie Louise towards the old portrait.

"Leave that expressionless face. Look at this one. How much more it tells you! We had a neighbor at St. Martin who was like him. He was found drowned in a stream, one night, but nobody in church sang better than he did. He was not a bad man. He drank too much. He was well punished."

" Mamma," said the little girl, " I like it when you tell stories. . . ."

Another time, resuming her piano study, which had been fairly far developed, but in rather a mechanical way, she took up Beethoven's sonata, so rightly named *The Appassionata,* and lived it so intensely that she forgot her sorrow, or rather, gave to it its pathetic interpretation. After the allegro, harassed, but lightened by the recurrence of a sadly ardent love motive, and the andante which lifts itself above human storms to perfect serenity, she began the third part, which is interrupted as if by despairing cries, when she heard Marie Louise, whose presence she had forgotten, weeping.

" What is the matter, dearest? "

" I don't know. Your playing is so sad."

" I should not have played that for you."

" Oh, yes; I love it when it is sad."

She had been able, then, to transmit her feeling, and to cultivate in her daughter that deep sensibility which the child inherited from her father, and which, developed, might become a source of noble joys and dignity to her. Albert, if he met her later, would be obliged to admit that, separated from him, his children had not deteriorated. That would be the revenge of the deserted woman.

In the spring, Elizabeth, who from time to time watched the book-store windows, saw a new book of her husband's advertised, the third volume of the "History of the Peasant." It was the first he had published since their separation. She had never desired so passionately to read a book. Fascinated, and yet not daring to buy a copy, she passed again and again. In Grenoble she was too well-known for this purchase not to be noticed and become the talk of the town. What was she to do? Her curiosity was so keen that it left her no peace. She discovered near her home in the Rue de Strasbourg, a little book shop with a wretched window, where she certainly would not be known. At nightfall she slipped into the shop.

"Will you give me the last volume of the 'History of the Peasant' by Albert Derize, if you please?"

"Albert Derize? Don't know him."

She, who had said these syllables with an effort, was irritated to hear them despised. She went out without thanking him, and hastened to the principal book-shop of the town on the Place Victor-Hugo, where, without dissembling, she bought the volume she coveted. As she was hurrying along with her treasure, she met Counselor Prémereux, who, always gallant to the ladies,

came up to her. After the usual polite platitudes, he pointed to the parcel.

" I wager it is a novel," he said.

" Yes, it is a novel."

" But, no, it is not the shape. . . ."

She blushed, and finding no ready lie, changed the conversation. As soon as she could get away, she ran home to hide herself. She had never read anything so eagerly. Disturbed by the children's questions, she waited for the evening to devote herself entirely to it.

It was, like the previous volumes, a very scholarly book, but so well constructed that it sustained itself, as it were, and rose page by page like a great building; and moreover, it seemed vibrant with light and filled with experience like one of those old stories of the past, which time cannot kill. Elizabeth imagined that the warmth and light, by which Albert's personality usually manifested itself, were particularly evident in this last volume, and she sought them in her eagerness with a new sensitiveness. She bore a grudge against the despised source of inspiration, and in consequence, her distress was increased. Panting, oppressed, tortured by the reading, and yet unable to put the book down, she reached, in the middle of the night, the last part, which dealt with the customs of the Basque coun-

try, and quoted them as examples of the strongest consolidation of a race, through the maintenance of a rural home and the family spirit. The author gave his own observations on the power of inheritance, on the active force of tradition. Following Le Play and Cheysson, he took up the history of the Melouga family, and passing into Spain, he quoted other examples of respect for the land joined with respect for the head of the family. The book finished with a sort of hymn in honor of the race and the soil.

No doubt such a conclusion did not lack irony. By what right was he, who thus exalted the family and the home, and in so solemn, exact and eloquent a style, qualified to speak of them? He showed the importance of unity in the family, of fixed inheritance, indissolubility of marriage; and he himself, voluntarily out of society, had left his wife and children, and visited the Basque countries to gather this sheaf of reflections there, in the company of his mistress. For a reader who knew the circumstances, this must be amusing. So many who lead regular lives, it is true, write anarchistic books, that one must expect by contrast, to receive lessons in conventionality from those who live irregularly, whose weakness in private life touches only the heart or the senses without corrupting the mind. It is so easy, so tempting, so flattering, to convert one's passions into

theories, to transform one's own misfortunes into public calamities, to generalize one's mistakes, that it required a clear-sighted point of view to distinguish the lack of solidity in his power of resistance to his own experience, and to understand that this implied a rare force of thought in him.

Elizabeth, when she closed the volume, had not grasped the irony of the contrast. But the realization that Albert had not changed in his social analyses and remained resolutely faithful to his first theories on the subject, which she now remembered having heard him outline, seemed to indicate to her that in place of a lost heart, a mental link still connected him with those whom he had deserted, and that she had not been betrayed as thoroughly as she thought.

IV

THE NEW LIFE

At the end of May, Elizabeth left Grenoble to settle in the old house at Saint Martin. Her daughter, a little anæmic and nervous, needed a change of air, and the doctor advised the mountains. She asked her parents, not without a secret mental reservation, to accept her hospitality. M. Molay-Norrois refused her invitation.

"We will go to Uriage in the great heat, of course. But in the middle of winter!"

"The middle of winter, Father? It is spring, and to-morrow it will be summer."

"Well, you must not count on me."

As he appreciated the country only if he could enjoy city pleasures there, with a great deal of social intercourse, he would wait until the hotels of the little watering place were filled. After this refusal, Elizabeth begged Mme. Derize to accompany her.

"You," she said to her, "will be our hostess. I had made up my mind to accept nothing more from Albert, and the property of Saint-Martin belongs to him. Marie Louise's illness necessi-

tates our going. When you are up there with me I shall have no such scruples."

"Why have them? Albert has only one hearth, yours. He owes you his assistance."

"I refuse it. Do you not understand?"

"No, a father has the care of his children. This separation causes me so much pain. As much as to you. He cannot realize it himself."

"Never speak to him of me."

"Of what should I speak to him, if not of his duty? Until my dying day, he will hear my complaint, if he persists in his wicked passion."

"And what does he answer you?"

"Never a word about this subject."

"You see, then!"

"We do not know his thoughts. Those who are proud do not willingly tell them, and his sin must increase his pride. When we are far from the truth, our spirit of rebellion naturally feeds on our wickedness. But comfort yourself, Elizabeth. When it is a question in my letters of you and your children I know how to spare your pride. I only want to ensure his recollection, his remorse."

"Oh, his remorse!"

"He is asleep, perhaps, but he will awaken. Each of us has his hour, and particularly when we add to the numerous sorrows of life those of our own creation.

She added, more sorrowfully:

"I feel old age coming on. Every day I ask God to grant me the joy of seeing you reconciled before I die."

And as if she were following for herself alone the thread of her own reflections: —

"That will bring them together, perhaps."

"What will, Mother?" asked Elizabeth.

Mme. Derize looked at her, as if she had come back from afar, and said smilingly:

"Oh, nothing, my dear girl. One sometimes has strange ideas . . ."

The life of these two women at Saint-Martin d'Uriage was quite simple and monotonous. The care of the children, some reading, walks, and a little music or long conversations in the evening filled their days, which began and ended early. Mme. Derize often walked along the plane avenue which led to the Chapel. As Elizabeth did not accompany her there, she chose, by preference, the time when the latter took Marie Louise and Philippe out walking in the open air, in the woods or meadows nearby. Her limbs soon felt the fatigue which her mind, remaining active and even keen until old age, did not know.

Elizabeth, recalling that Albert had praised the benefit of physical fatigue in his note-books,

trained herself to take a longer walk each day. At the beginning she had to listen to sarcasm from Marie Louise, who ran down the roads like a hare and reproached Philippe and her mother for their laziness. Little by little, as her physical condition improved, she covered greater distances and found that she took a new pleasure in this exercise that she had formerly disliked. On the slopes of Chamrousse, as far from the house as the little legs of her son would allow him to go, she looked with surprise (as if she had only just discovered them) at the high arches formed by the pine trees with their straight tops, resembling the columns of a cathedral. She was impressed by them with a sense of awe. Nature ceased to be to her, as in the previous autumn, a sorrowful companion.

Almost every evening, from the porch, she watched night come on. The flocks and their shepherds, who crowded around the pond, gave her that feeling of peace, which, at the close of day, the country exhales like a perfume.

Marie Louise had to admit that her mother walked almost as well as she did.

"But you can't run!"

"Let us try."

The young woman gathered up her skirts and tried. Her children, who had never seen her

so merry, shouted joyfully and forgot to run with her. This new superiority aroused their enthusiasm.

"Certainly," concluded the little girl, "the only thing left for you is the ravine."

"Which ravine?"

"Papa's."

It was a mysterious, wild place, which she had never been able to find herself. Her father had once taken her there, and they had found difficulty in getting out, owing to the interlaced branches and briars and pebbles. She had retained a heroic memory of it with which she used to dazzle her friends on exceptional occasions.

Albert's mother, who was informed of these adventures, told of the prowess of her son, who, in his first youth, had loved the mountains for the purity of their air, for their commanding views, and above all, for their dangers. Elizabeth, little by little, learned of her husband's youth — after his childhood, about which she had never been curious. She was obliged, as well, to satisfy her children, who asked for stories of adventure. And there she was again, but now with method and a desire to succeed, at times kneeling on the floor, again mounted on a ladder, to explore the library shelves which stocked an entire room from floor to ceiling, into which she had previously seldom gone. After many searches, she found a

volume of stories of Dauphiné, and began to wade through these tales; then, as she grew more familiar with them, she learned to change them, to bring out the dramatic effects, and to modify the endings in an optimistic way, so as not to sadden Marie Louise, who was too fond of the characters in her stories, while Philippe interpreted the catastrophes more philosophically. The devil who built a wall of enclosure round the park at Vizille, and who was captured by Marshall de Lesdiguières; the fairy Mélusine, who lived in the Sassenage caves, whose daughter was a siren and became a woman through love, especially aroused the children's imagination, because they had visited these same places of enchantment the previous year in the Passerat's motor, which was for them quite sufficient to give an air of reality to the legend.

"We did not see Mélusine at Sassenage, Mamma," exclaimed Marie Louise.

"She is not there now."

"Where is she?"

"Very far away in the sea."

The little girl remained thoughtful, and then said:

"They ought to have told me her story while we were in the cave. It is so stupid to walk about a cave without hearing anything about the fairy!"

Elizabeth's thoughts flew naturally to Albert, who would have been so amused at this remark. It was the artless criticism, so flattering to an historian, of so many travelers, who go around the world, seeing nothing but outward appearances, knowing of nothing but more or less picturesque forms. As to Philippe, he liked best the devil who builds walls and who is paid in monkey's money.

Now that the library was in use again, the young woman made a habit of rummaging among the books. After attending to the needs of her children, she busied herself with her own. She reread certain of her husband's works, which she had previously scanned hastily, merely from a sense of duty, and now found great pleasure in them. Then she read; biographies for preference, or memoirs which, because of their direct contact with life, suited her nature, more realistic than imaginative. Little by little, without being conscious of the slow metamorphosis which was taking place within her, she came to a better understanding of the human imprint of ancient civilization in our own country, and the importance of the past, of great men, of monuments and of works of art. By a strange conversion, she found herself acquiring her husband's tastes when she was separated from him — no doubt forever. The influence of intellectual activity which he had never exercised over her in

eight years of married life, was now being felt from a distance, and he would never know anything of it.

Better prepared for conversation, having reinforced her thoughts by new excursions into the world, it happened in the evening that the usual hour of bed-time passed, as she was talking to her mother-in-law — whose cultivated mind she at last understood — of subjects which formerly would not have interested her for a moment. Then glancing at the clock, one of them remarked:

"How late it is!"

And Elizabeth, tired out, soon fell asleep, instead of more freely and sorrowfully reviewing her troubles in the darkness of night, as she had for a long time been in the habit of doing.

Among the elements of instruction which the two women, assisting each other, gave to the children, she had reserved music for herself, in which she tried to cultivate their taste by singing simple popular airs, which she made them repeat. The house, on certain days, was filled with song and the village children stopped in front of the gate to listen. Little Philippe threw his big bell-like voice into the music like a ball into a game of nine pins, and the notes came out with great force. His sister used to be annoyed at this, but the

dispute always ended in shouts of laughter.

This gayety seemed to an old peasant, Claude Terraz, who was passing down the road in his cart, to be a good sign, and seeing through the railings Mme. Derize, Sr., working in her garden, he allowed himself, by the established rights of a neighbor, to inquire:

"Well, Madame, has M. Albert come home?"

"Not yet, Claude."

"But he will come back?"

"Soon, my friend. We are expecting him."

"Ah, so much the better. There must be a man in the house. A man for the spade — a woman for the soup, and both to feed the youngsters."

And with this statement he whipped up his team of oxen and went on his way.

Those were the good days. There were bad ones too. Elizabeth, more refined and sensitive, had become very susceptible, irritable, and overemphasized the little things, or again settled into her former apathy. She knew the rebellion which crushes us as we battle in vain against the indifference of fate, and the despair which plunges our souls into the depths. In those hours, she wished she might hear of Albert's death to put an end to the suffering which her jealousy brought. With delicate tact, but without words or allusions, Mme. Derize healed her wounds, as do those

nurses in a sick-room, who work silently, but are never idle.

The heat of July brought back the summer crowd to the little station at Uriage. But the Molay-Norrois were not as socially active as they had been. Although they were again occupying Mélèzes on the slope which leads to the Castle of Saint-Ferriol, the Passerats had given up their villa and had rented one in the lower part of the valley near Vaulnaveys. The two families still saw each other, but less frequently. Through the Vimelles, the Passerats were making very aristocratic connections. M. Molay-Norrois, on a strict diet since his last attack of gout, was obliged to agree that he was better off at home, and was grateful for it to his wife. Attention to the state of his health had replaced every other thought in his mind. He took care of himself with the solicitude and keen zest with which he had always sought to please, and now indulged himself with consultations and medicines, as he had formerly done with the secret pleasures of love. He had not given up society, but had subordinated it to his health, and now entered into it with moderation. He who had spent hours on his toilette, and created fashions, now found an intimate charm in putting on his slippers and smoking a pipe after dinner, in noting with satisfaction that his digestion was in good order. Mme. Molay-Norrois,

while she herself attended to his special soups and broths, a new occupation for her, took hope again, and did not wish for a too rapid or radical cure. Their two sons, Oliver and Victor, who came on leave one after the other, manifested toward Elizabeth a protecting affection which annoyed her. But they gave up no pleasures for her sake, and neither the one nor the other thought of curtailing his mode of living, which might have permitted their parents to make some arrangement about her dowry, which the young woman, living willingly on her own money, had never requested.

The motor picnics began again. The Derizes were invited. Elizabeth, not wishing to give her children luxurious habits, refused, quoting the advice of their physician, who advocated walking. She often wen into Saint Martin to visit her father and mother, and one day, walking under the shade of the chestnut trees, she met the two young men, who, when they recognized her the previous year, had loudly praised her. Wearing a loose-fitting white flannel dress, which made her look younger, she held Philippe by the hand, while Marie Louise, who had spied some huckleberries, had climbed the hill a few steps behind. They stared at her with that coolness which our manners allow and do not stamp as a proof of bad breeding. Involuntarily the blood mounted to

her cheeks. She wished to hurry on, and turned awkwardly to call her daughter. They also turned and slackened their steps. Marie Louise joined her at a gallop to tell her:

"You know, Mamma, you are more beautiful than you were last year."

"Silly little thing, instead of talking nonsense, it would be better next time if you did not leave me."

But the child clung to her idea which she would not give up.

"It is not nonsense. Those gentlemen down there said so."

"Why did you listen to them?"

"Because they were talking about you."

"That is no reason."

The little girl would not allow herself to be quieted.

"There was a dark one and a light one. The dark one talked like this: 'She has lost, she is thinner.'

"What have you lost, Mamma? And the light one said: 'She is beautiful.'"

"Be quiet," said Elizabeth. "I don't like children who listen to the conversations of passersby."

It was more than sixteen months since she had separated from her husband. She had certainly changed very much, and did not notice it herself

until she had made alterations in her old dresses, which, as a matter of economy, she still wished to wear. Slighter, she appeared to be like those stems, which add grace to a flower, as they grow longer. Her limbs, a little long in proportion to her figure, had gained, by her habit of walking, a greater ease, a freer gait. Her long neck, very white, which she generally left bare, carried her head more gracefully. It might be said that she had let her overweight, which had made her body heavy and weak, fall from her like a garment. The friends of her family, for the most part, regretted it, thinking she was pining away, and that it was so sad for such a pretty woman. The open air and her natural good health fortunately counteracted the slow results of the mental anguish which was undermining her. But even these assets could not prevent the imprint of suffering on her youthful face. Two creases had stamped themselves at each corner of her little mouth. The outline of her face was finer. A little wrinkle showed between the eyebrows. Her dark eyes, outlined by the bluish circle around them, reflected a deeper life. Sometimes languid, sometimes ardent, their expression always revealed to those who understood, a little fright and homesickness, like the tender look of those tame deer, who as they eat from your hand, are always afraid of being illtreated, and are thinking of

their broad native woods. The play of color on her cheeks was also quicker; it came and went at almost the same moment. And even her voice had taken on a more serious intonation, and seemed to have a deeper tone. Thus changed, with her flimsy gowns and big summer hats, she looked more and more like those English portraits which give to women so much charm and dignity. But it was one of those portraits which one comes back to see again, because of not gaining at one glance a full sense of its beauty.

The new peace she found at Les Mélèzes, made her mother happy. But Elizabeth heard and disliked the echo of gossip which, as in all watering places, was making the rounds at Uriage. What did it matter to her that Mme. de Vimelle could no longer seriously ignore her husband's liaison, or that Mme. Passerat had promoted Counselor Prémereux to the degree of chief steward of her kitchen? One day they told her of the coming marriage of Philippe Lagier, who had been living for some time at the Park Hotel.

"To whom?" she asked, interestedly.

"To Mlle. Berthe Rivière."

She recalled the girl who had played tennis with a grace intended to attract the spectators. Before going home to Saint Martin, she went out of her way to go to the tennis-court. Mlle. Ri-

vière, chuckling with laughter which sang the joy of life, was scoring, while her partner, Philippe Lagier, transformed into a faithful knight, was disrespectfully devouring her with his eyes.

"Yours!" they shouted to him.

But he lost the ball. And the young girl, sure of her power, let him lose the game without a murmur.

"Already!" thought Elizabeth, as she walked along the chestnut path which took her back to her solitude.

How soon one was forgotten! What lies, these love vows! It only needed a smile revealing gleaming teeth, a fresh skin, a movement of the hips to substitute a new desire for the most exalted emotion. But perhaps she was not one of those who inspire lasting passions. Perhaps she left only a fleeting impression, soon to vanish, as she had sometimes heard it said of certain women with pure impassive features. This little wound to her self-love she added to that from which she was suffering, and which would never be healed.

A few days later, invited to dinner at Mélèzes with some other people, she found herself placed at table next to Philippe Lagier, who had Mlle. Rivière as his dinner partner. Would she take advantage of this? The barrister turned toward her, and to keep her attention, made use of

all the resources of a mind trained to please. He understood perfectly the art of conversation which lends color and picturesqueness to all subjects, and which seems to imply a flattering sympathy. The glare of the lights, the bright dresses, the bare shoulders, the air warm, but invigorating, which came in through the open window, contributed to a harmony in which life unfolds itself in an atmosphere of joy. She was listening to Philippe, whose intelligent features were unattractive only when in repose. Near him, she gave no further thought to the scene which had separated them. Soothed, forgetting her trouble, happy, she was enjoying her success. All at once, raising her head, she saw fixed upon her the gaze of Mlle. Rivière. It was a look of distress, expressing not hatred, but despair and admiration. It said so clearly, "You are too beautiful. I know well that I cannot struggle against you — have pity!"— that she was upset by it, because it made her think of herself. Thus for a few minutes she had fully enjoyed her power over a man whose dead or dying passion for her, self-love induced her to revive; and at the same time, she had felt herself to be mastered by the conversation of this man whose subtle meaning she still feared. In addition she had unscrupulously risked breaking another heart. She was ashamed of her vanity, and particularly of her weakness for which

she reproached herself as a traitor. Turning from Philippe, she gave him back to Mlle. Rivière, but he had lost his high spirits. At the end of the evening, she refused his offer to escort her home to Saint Martin. On the road at night, as she passed the place where the year before she had rebelled so violently, her new conduct seemed incomprehensible and the humiliation she felt in her own estimation, aroused in her a greater indulgence toward the faults of others, and at the same time a resolution to watch herself more closely.

V

A GHOST

With the first autumn rains, the bathers left Uriage. M. Molay-Norrois had not waited until the end of September to pack up and go away.

"Don't you feel the dampness, my dear?" he said twenty times a day to his wife, even when the weather was dry, though not quite so warm. "It drifts into this narrow valley. Let us get back to town where we can make ourselves comfortable."

After a little opposition, Mme. de Molay-Norrois gave in. No doubt she wanted to be near her daughter and grandchildren, but thought more of her invalid's happiness. Soon Elizabeth recovered the solitude in which she had been so happy the previous year. Somewhat rheumatic, and wishing not to become a burden on her daughter-in-law in this resourceless village, her mother-in-law had gone back to Grenoble at the beginning of October.

"Come back to me soon," she said at parting. "Solitude at your age is not a good counselor."

But the youngsters were in splendid health,

and Elizabeth let herself sink into that supine state, which comes with the last rays of the autumn sun and the treacherous charm of Nature. The view of a deeper forest, a more impassioned feeling which she was beginning to understand, filled her this season with a bitterness which soothed her. She was conscious of her weakness, afraid of it, and forced herself to struggle against it. In order not to take up the routine of the city so soon, she invited Blanche Vernier to spend a week or two at Saint Martin with her children. These, four in number, put themselves under the yoke of Marie Louise and Philippe who surpassed them in brains and cleverness. Elizabeth was entertained for several days by the simple joy expressed by her friend, in following the work in the fields, which was entirely new to her, in running down the wild paths, in which, accustomed to city life, she found an almost exaggerated charm. Then she grew weary of her exclamations, even of her pretty sayings which were somewhat vulgar. She wearied of it, because, abandoned and neglected, she was more sensitive and susceptible than usual, at this season which deepens one's suffering. Then she allowed Blanche to take the crowd of children out, and remained alone to express her sadness in the music she interpretated, to begin but not finish

books, whose contagious melancholy she knew, and still more uselessly, to think, aimlessly, hopelessly and without any object, for no purpose but the pleasure of giving herself as much pain as possible. And, rousing herself from that state of languor, she determined that she could no longer remain in the country.

One day, when she had stayed in the house, she understood, when the children came in, and from the expression of Blanche Vernier's face, that something unusual had happened during the walk. Marie Louise, a little troubled, wore a mysterious circumspect air which was very evident, while big Philippe was swelled with his own importance almost to the bursting point. The others tried to explain that they had met a gentleman — a remarkable phenomenon at Saint Martin at this season — but the little girl interrupted them brusquely in an authoritative voice:

"Be quiet."

Over the heads of the youngsters, Blanche gave lively signals which bespoke no good.

"Go and have tea in the dining-room," commanded Elizabeth, out of patience, and when the drawing-room was empty, she asked her friend, "What has happened: Anything serious?"

"Well, as we were coming down towards the Château of Saint-Ferriol we met a man. . . ."

"Who?"

"Wait a minute — a man whom I did not know."

Elizabeth, nervous, asked these questions:

"What was he like?"

"You know I can't distinguish men very well, one from the other. It seemed to me he was very tall, rather thin, sharp features and a military air. Is that he?"

"Go on."

"He looked at us as we passed, then after we had gone a few steps he turned round and called: 'Marie Louise.' Your daughter raised her head and then ran to him."

"You should not have allowed her to speak to a stranger."

"You know very well that he was not a stranger. Naturally I did not know it, and I called out and then stopped. But the little girl paid no attention to what I said. She made a sign to her brother to join her. So I came up to interfere more directly, and it is to my credit, because you know how shy I am. 'These children are in my charge.' 'I give them back to you, Madame,' he replied, bowing very politely to me. 'I am a relative and I allowed myself to stop them.' He was very much touched. He was holding Marie Louise and Philippe by the hand. I even think he had tears in his eyes."

"You are not sure?"

"I am a little short-sighted, and I am always afraid of being indiscreet in looking too closely. Then he kissed the children passionately — almost madly. I was sorry for him. I could have cried too. I cry so easily.

"'Come with us,' Marie Louise said to him.

"'I can't —'

"'Mamma did not see you, did she?'

"'I must go away.'

"'Already? This is not a visit. You will come back?'

"'Yes.'

"He passed on hurriedly. I thought he had disappeared behind the chestnut trees, but as I turned back, I saw him looking after us —"

"That is all?"

"Yes, that is all."

"I placed my children in your charge. You should not have left them —"

"Left them?"

"Yes, even for a minute. . . ."

This reproach was manifestly unjust. Although not far-sighted, Blanche Vernier possessed that instinct of the heart which penetrates the hidden causes of our acts or our feelings — Divining her friend's emotion, she bore this absurd accusation without defending herself. Elizabeth trembled at the thought that she might have met her

husband, not knowing in her confusion whether she regretted or dreaded this meeting.

"Listen," she said in a softer voice. "Go to the children and send Marie Louise to me."

A few minutes later, the little girl came in, not with her nose in the air and a bright face, with the dancing step with which she shook her blonde curls as she tripped through the house, but instead with a stiff walk and lowered eyes.

Her mother drew her towards her too jealously and held her arms —

"Look at me!"

As the child hesitated in her embarrassment, Elizabeth who was very nervous, grew angry.

"But look at me — whom did you meet on the road?"

Marie Louise who did not know how to tell a lie, nevertheless answered:

"Nobody."

"Nobody? How can you deceive your mother. That is bad. That is naughty."

The little girl who was bravely holding her own against this threatening tone, weakened before this outburst of sorrow. And then, it became great news to announce —

"Well, yes, we met papa."

"Why did you not tell me when you came back?"

"I don't know, Mamma."

"Did he say you were not to tell?"

"Oh, no."

"You should have no secrets from your mother."

The child began to cry, and had to be consoled — Her silence which she could not explain, was the mysterious intuition of the divorce of her parents, whom she had to love separately without the knowledge of either of them, for fear of hurting them. She could not think that she might have both a father and mother at the same time like her little friends — And yet both were alive — The meeting that afternoon had settled all doubts concerning the existence of her father, whom she never saw, and about whom she had even heard it said that he was dead to her. But these complications put her in a state of uneasiness which wearied one of her age. Elizabeth continued her questions more tenderly this time:

"You recognized him at once?"

"I did not look at him when he passed us — but afterwards he called me. . . ."

"He called you?"

"Yes, then I knew him."

"Tell me about it, dearie."

"He called: 'Marie Louise.' I raised my head and I ran. When I was quite near him I cried, 'Papa.' He held me so tight that I choked

— and he wet my cheeks because he was crying. Why, Mamma?"

"He was touched at seeing you after such a long time."

Marie Louise seemed to reflect.

"Why didn't he come home before? He said to me, 'And Philippe?' So I called 'Philippe!' Philippe came, but he said, 'Who is that?' I said, 'It's papa.' Then Mme. Blanche came up too. They quarreled."

"Quarreled?"

"No, not quarreled, but they looked at each other crossly. Then papa went away."

Elizabeth overcame her hesitation and again asked,

"He sent no message to me?"

"I said to him, 'Come and see mamma.'"

"Ah, and what did he answer?"

"He did not answer. He said, 'I will come back.'"

"That is all?"

"Yes. Why are you crying, Mamma?"

"I am not crying —"

She pressed her daughter passionately to her heart and covered with kisses the face that Albert had kissed. With an imperious longing for affection she murmured in her daughter's ear.

"Do you love me?"

"Oh! dear Mamma —"

"And your father?"

"Papa too, but not as much as you."

"Why?"

"He is never here — You know, he looks sad."

"Really. He looks sad? Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, does that make you glad?"

"Oh, darling —"

"He has promised to come back. You want him to come back, don't you?"

"For your sake and Philippe's — yes, perhaps — Some day a long time from now."

"No, right away."

Reassured little by little, Elizabeth told little Marie Louise, who was too impressionable, to go back to her playfellows. She herself being unable to regain her self-possession, walked up and down the house. At last she crept on tiptoe to the door. Erect and motionless, on the point of going out, she looked down the road as far as the trees. Perhaps Albert was wandering about there, being unable to decide to leave these places which must recall his childhood and so many memories. So many memories? No, he had seen his children, nothing else could interest him. He had gone back, no doubt. Nevertheless, "he seemed sad," Marie Louise had said. If he were suddenly to appear at the turn of the road,

there before her, what would she do? She did not know, she reached no decision and time went on.

Evening came, an autumn evening sharp and almost freezing. She looked for a shawl to cover her shoulders and continued to gaze distractedly, as if before the day ended, she were calling the danger she feared. Darkness which already filled the valley, was ascending the mountain, hastening to overtake the forest of thick, black pine trees, which seemed like a foretaste of night. The red of the sunset streaked the sky: the first star shewed itself above Les Quatre Seigneurs.

Elizabeth could not make up her mind to go in. The change in the light gave an appearance of motion to the bushes and to the trees on the road. Every moment she thought she saw someone coming and stood trembling, her feet glued to the threshold. After many mistakes, she recognized a human shape coming up the road. Fear made her knees tremble. No, it was not he; it was a woman, bent, thin and slow. It was Albert's mother. Out of breath, her limbs weak, overcome with weariness, she was painfully dragging herself along. Elizabeth, reassured, freed herself with a great effort, ran to her, saw that she was worn out; took her arm, made her come in, and placed her beside the hearth.

"Why did you not tell me you were coming, Mother? I would have sent the farmer to meet you with his car. There is no carriage at Uriage now, and you have had to walk all the way."

Mme. Derize smiled in a way which meant, "How often I have done without carriages!" But she had not reckoned with her age, nor her weakness, and was regaining her breath with difficulty. Marie Louise, Philippe and the little Verniers, who surrounded her, watched her with the surprise of children at old age or illness. Elizabeth begged her friend Blanche to take them away. Left alone with her mother-in-law for whom she prepared a cup of boiling tea, with a little rum in it, she saw her become refreshed little by little, and then sit up, her face expressing that peace, so pure and noble, yet tinged with sadness, with which she accepted all the happenings of life. Then Elizabeth asked herself the reason for her departure from Grenoble, and whether that unexpected visit did not have something to do with Albert's arrival. Mme. Derize did not let her wait long for an explanation which she was eager to give.

"Elizabeth, my son has been with me for three days. He has changed very much, he is worried, uneasy and nervous. He is not happy."

Attentive and anxious, Elizabeth was silent.

"He went away this morning," continued the old lady.

"He was here just now."

"Here. You have seen him?"

Albert's mother bent toward her daughter-in-law, her cheekbones suddenly flushed with a rush of color, contrasting with the pallor of her face, her eyes fixed and shining with fever, in a state of unaccustomed exaltation foreign to her nature.

"Not I. But the children."

Elizabeth told the short story of the meeting of Marie Louise and Philippe with their father. Mme. Derize, resting against her chair, lost her abnormal excitement as she listened.

"Just now," she said, "I thought he was here, that you were reconciled, that he had been unable to go away. I was so happy — so happy."

"Oh, Mother, could you hope that?"

"I always hope it. And you do, too, do you not?"

"I no longer know. I am so weary of suffering! And then how can I forgive him, how can I forget him? He has gone back to *her*."

The old woman took Elizabeth's hand and held it.

"My child, if you prayed to God, as I do, your hope would be strengthened. Illicit passions can never bring happiness. Happiness means

peace in one's heart. They are powerless to insure that."

"They bring with them a more passionate existence. I do not understand. That people desire them and die for them suffices to make them endure."

"If you could have seen him, listened to him, you would not speak thus. It is not on my account that he came to Grenoble. He thought he would meet the children there. He had no idea that you would remain so late in the mountains. And this morning, instead of leaving for Italy, he came up here without further reflection, in the hope of seeing his children. He has forgotten nothing."

"Oh, Mother, and me?"

"You, Elizabeth? Did you not understand that it was because of you that he has never tried to see his children until now?"

"He never asked to see them. If he had asked, I should not have refused. He could not have them come to him, however, in Paris."

"Listen, Elizabeth. All the time he was overwhelming me with questions about them. He was obsessed with the thought of them."

"And he has never given them any indication that he was still alive."

"Because he did not want to trouble your life,

to impose painful obligations upon you, or remind you of a tie which he thinks is sorrowful to you."

And she added in a tone of prayer, as if to protect her son:

"At least that is the way I explain it — particularly since his promise."

"What promise?"

"Yesterday I asked him to put nothing definite between you and himself."

"Definite?"

"Yes, not to seek a divorce."

And in a lower voice, she added:

"I should never have survived it."

"What did he answer?" asked Elizabeth anxiously.

"After a slight hesitation, he replied: 'I promise you. Only, it is Elizabeth's right.' Elizabeth, I believe he will come back to us. Will you not help him?"

The young woman turned away with that frightened expression which she often wore.

"What do you wish me to do, Mother? I cannot contend for him with that woman — I do not know how."

"No, but promise me that if he comes back some day you will receive him, you will welcome him in spite of the past."

"He will not come back."

"If I went to look for him?"

Elizabeth repeated despairingly:

"He would not come back. . . ."

"And if . . ."

"Mother, what is the matter with you?"

"If I fell ill? He would have to come back, would have to see you."

Mme. Derize looked so pale, so fragile, that this suggestion seemed a reality. Elizabeth, uneasy, realizing that the attack was growing worse, put her to bed and watched over her. In the evening the old woman laid her feverish hand on the bent head of her companion:

"I was right when I told him. . . ."

"What, Mother?"

"That you are my daughter."

VI

MADAME DERIZE

After eighteen months, Elizabeth was awaiting her husband. The sad event which was bringing them together had had its beginning on the evening when Albert's mother had walked too quickly to Saint Martin. After Madame Derize's night of suffering, the young wife, foreseeing danger, instinctively made the wisest decision and telegraphed to her parents and to her doctor at Grenoble. She asked for immediate help, realizing that while there was still time, they would have to get away at once from a village so primitive and resourceless, and requested the most comfortable means of transport. M. Molay-Norrois — and his wife made no objection — and told Mme. Passerat how useful her motor would be under such circumstances; and she, with that keen executive ability and rapidity of action, of which she had so often given proof in organizing society fêtes, gave orders that her 40 h.p. car be arranged as an ambulance, and sent with it a doctor and a necessary medicine chest to the mountains of Uriage.

"This is the first time I have traveled in a motor," murmured the invalid smilingly, as she was carried into it on the bed arranged for her.

In the afternoon she was brought to her home on the Boulevard des Adieux, and her daughter-in-law took her place at her bedside. The next day Blanche Vernier came down with the children, of whom she had offered to take charge. The case was diagnosed as congestion of the lungs, which grew no worse until the fifth day. Immediately upon her arrival at Grenoble, Elizabeth had begged Philippe Lagier to wire to Albert's address in Paris. As there was no answer, she sent repeated telegrams, all of which were returned to her marked "Absent." When the invalid was questioned she could give no exact information. As her son left her, he had spoken of a rapid journey to Piedmont, returning to Paris over the Simplon.

"I shall write to you during the trip," he had added.

A post card came, which bore the name of an unknown village in Italy. On a detailed map they found that it was in the neighborhood of Ivrée. In accordance with his usual plan, the traveler was journeying through out of the way places to gain information for his book. Another telegram, directed there as a last resort, did not reach him. At last he wrote from Aosta,

and his letter stated that he would spend a week there. Informed directly, he wired that he would leave with all possible haste. It was the eighth day and his mother had passed away the night before. They did not tell him so, but he could draw that conclusion from the telegram.

She would no doubt have recovered from an illness whose symptoms had not at first given rise to much alarm, had it not been for her age, and more especially for that gradual weakening, which in time, results from financial worries, sorrows and mental strain. After the death of her husband, she had known the worry of financial straits, the necessity for work, and all the demands of the noblest maternal ambition. This son, the thought of whom had comforted her broken life, for whose development she had paved the way, whose success she had followed with so much joy and confidence, had now in turn, made her suffer, by renouncing the duty she considered most sacred, the devotion which in the innate consciousness of one of her race, seemed to her to be most important; that of continuing, of upholding the tradition of the family. She had bitterly reproached herself for the excess of delicacy which had prevented her from acting as peace-maker between Albert and Elizabeth, in whom she often told herself, she should have been able earlier to realize the virtue which had lain dormant until it

was gradually brought out by a crisis. This separation had slowly undermined and weakened her. She exhausted herself in prayer, and in her faith in the expediency of sacrifice, as of a burnt offering to obtain from God the return of him, whom she called in secret her prodigal son. With what haste she had gone to Saint Martin, after her son's last visit, to cheer up Elizabeth's languishing hopes. On the way she had faced the fatigue which weakened her limbs, often stopping to take breath, sustained by the idea that she was bringing a little comfort to the deserted woman. For a moment she believed that Albert had gone before her. He had come, but had not remained. Then she had that vision of unusual exaltation; that perhaps her death might bring about what her life had been unable to accomplish.

If not at once, at least after the second day she understood, alone, that it was the end, and prepared herself for it. The illness hovered over her without crushing her, at last took hold of her, but without that violence which suppresses thought and destroys the intellectual faculties, in that last struggle that frees an inert body. She departed, with her brain intact and her heart full. Her calmness was surprising, almost terrifying to those about her. She asked for religious help and received it with a piety, which was like the natural breath of her soul.

"Jean," she said several times.

It was the name of her husband, whom no one had heard her mention for a long time. She was reserved about her most intimate emotions. This name, so peacefully invoked, revealed the endurance of a deathless love which eternity would satisfy — or again she would ask:

"Is he coming?"

By this she meant her son. And it was only this question which she asked so often that had the power to dim her clear eyes, to still her features, already motionless and almost fixed with a serenity which anticipated death. She began on the third day, despite the reassuring prognosis, to show some evidence of what was so soon to occur. With great composure she told Fanchette, who protested against it, where to find the sheets and her bridal dress. She asked for a humble funeral, without flowers or wreaths. She saw Philippe and Marie Louise, tried to smile at them and begged that they should not be brought again.

Elizabeth, assisted with the best of good-will by Mme. Molay-Norrois, possessing that almost supernatural strength of woman at the bedside of invalids — watched over and took care of her day and night. When she came near her, she felt a sort of fear in seeing her so peaceful and almost relaxed. Once, being unable to hear the advice

her mother-in-law was quietly giving her, she burst into sobs.

"Do not leave me, Mother," she entreated. "What shall I do without you — you are still Albert."

"I shall not leave you," said the dying woman with conviction.

And, with infinite tenderness, she added faintly:

"My daughter.— I had formerly regretted having had no daughter. One is always in a hurry to pity oneself!"

Then she seemed to gather a little strength, sufficient to inquire:

"Elizabeth, he will come back some day, I am certain of it. When he does, will you promise me that you will forgive him, forgive him without any restriction?"

How could Elizabeth refuse?

"I promise you," she said solemnly.

"That is right," answered Mme. Derize, "if he were there, I should have tried to join your hands. It is not time yet."

On the fifth day she appeared to be resigned to the fact that her son would not return. It was her last hope. She wished to see Philippe Lagier, who came every day to inquire about her. Their interviews, entirely alone, were of short duration; talking was already too much for her. She

charged him to tell his friend of Elizabeth's devotion and of the change which had taken place in her. Was he not called to that mission and how could she, in the purity of her heart, suspect the humiliation he had known, which quite recently, he had believed to be incompatible with his engagement? Finally with great effort and frequent pauses, she expressed this singular confidence, which revealed to what degree she had thought of all the possibilities of reconciliation.

"On Albert's last visit, so few days ago, I knew that he was not happy. I was expecting that. Happiness cannot endure, except in truth. Then I thought that I would go to Paris, that I would go to see her."

"To see her?" repeated Philippe, who could not believe his ears.

"Yes, her. I have thought a great deal about it. Albert could not have broken so many ties for a miserable love. I knew him to be incapable of wickedness, although he is passionate and proud. Now this plan can no longer be realized. . . ."

"When you are better."

"I shall never be better. Come closer. I want you to hear what I should have said to her, to her alone. Of his own accord, Albert will not leave her. I feel it: he has replaced the duty

he has renounced with another, the chains of which he has tightened for himself. It is well said that one can never escape from his duty in life. I would have said to that woman:

"Whatever your love may be, it cannot make him happy. You realized that before I did. You were to blame for loving him when he was not free. If your love is what I think, it must be capable of sacrifice, even of secret sacrifice. Be generous, I will bless you and . . ."

Choking stopped her, and she was unable to finish that exhausting communication, which implied so much cleverness and such faith in heroism. Philippe came back a little later, but the invalid's condition had grown worse. She tried once again to explain something to him which he was not able to catch, as her words had already become very indistinct. Did she wish him to undertake this strange mission on her behalf? The next day, which was the day of her death, she appeared transfigured, as if indifferent to all that was going on about her. She was resting in peace in advance. Her lips which still moved, showed that she was praying. She paid no attention to Albert's letter which Elizabeth was reading. Nevertheless, turning her eyes toward her daughter, whose grief was overcoming her, she tried to put her hand on her bent head, but it fell back

with an uncertain movement. They were saying prayers for the dying, as she did not stir again. And her last breath followed the last verse.

Elizabeth, spent with fatigue and conquered by her nerves, called to her with a loud cry, as if in losing her she lost her love for a second time, and would henceforth be without protection. Her parents, considering her extreme in filial devotion, a virtue which, according to the gossip of the town, their son-in-law had utterly neglected, insisted upon taking her away.

"Now," said Mme. Molay-Norrois, alarmed at her condition, and wishing to quiet her over-excitement, "now stay with us. You have fulfilled every duty and more than your duty. You must take care of your health, for your children's sake and your own."

But who would be there when Albert arrived with despair in his heart? Who would receive him, explain the illness to him, tell him about the last moments of the invalid, give him her last thoughts and that sort of consolation so essential to strong souls: that of exhausting all the details of sorrow? No, no, she had not yet finished her work. In the spirit, if not in actuality, she was Albert's wife. She would be there to palliate the first shock faithfully, to give to the son the substance of the words and injunctions which she had received from his mother. One might ac-

cuse her of lack of dignity: what matter? Mme. Derize would be pleased with her.

She had calculated that he would arrive with the morning train at eight o'clock. Before eight she went to the Boulevard des Adieux. Her heart was beating, however, she trembled, she was afraid, but remained there. Philippe, who had gone to the station, came back with Albert, to whom he had broken the sad news. In the carriage along the road he alone had spoken. At the sound of the bell, Fanchette, dragging her feet, came to open the door.

"My poor Fanchette," said Albert, as he embraced her. It was his first word of emotion.

She dried her tears and showed him into the drawing-room.

"Madame is there," she said.

He thought she meant his mother and went in. He found himself face to face with Elizabeth, who was standing and walked to meet him; he made an involuntary movement of surprise, as if he did not recognize her. He no longer found the same Elizabeth, whom he had left eighteen months before, her beauty then somewhat heavy and sluggish, her face round and expressionless, but he now saw a new Elizabeth, thinner, more graceful, looking taller in her mourning gown, pale through lack of sleep, her eyes surrounded with dark circles, her features sunken — all de-

noting a life of suffering, which counteracted the disadvantages of sorrow. Philippe Lagier who followed him, had not anticipated that she would have the courage to be there. And with a greater freedom of observation, although equally sorrowful, he noticed that she was wearing a bodice which showed her figure to advantage. When the bell rang, she had trembled so that she had been obliged to lean against a table. Then everything seemed to simplify itself for her quickly. The obligation which was imposed upon her could not offend her dignity. She would fulfill it and would then return to the darkness. One imagines in advance difficulties which disappear of themselves. Seeing her husband under such circumstances, she realized a great inner peace, as soon as he came in. With a voice, which too, had changed and become lower, she said at once without speaking his name,

"She was waiting for you. As I had the privilege of helping her in your place, I will tell you about her, of her last days, if you wish."

After shaking hands with her, Philippe expressed his intention of withdrawing, but she detained him for a moment, almost begging for his protection.

"You will come back soon, will you not? In an hour?"

"Yes, Madame."

They were left alone, facing each other, he confused, motionless, finding not a word to say; she, carrying on, with amazing ease, this interview which she had so dreaded.

"I had wired to Paris," she explained. "We did not know where to reach you. At last your letter came from Aosta."

With dry lips, his face drawn by the sorrow to which he would not give way, he murmured:

"I had left her so well only a few days ago! I had no presentiment, I thought I should keep her for a long time to come."

"Yes, we never think we can lose those we love. You must be tired. You have not eaten nor slept. Will you have something? Later we can speak of her."

"I want to see her."

"She is there. Come."

She led him into the death chamber, knelt for a moment at the foot of the bed, motioning to the nun who was watching the body to follow her. She had divined Albert's desire. When he was sure of being alone, his sorrow carried him beyond all bounds, as a river its dam. She who lay there, emaciated and white, her eyes closed, her hands crossed over a crucifix — and what withered hands! — she whose forehead and cheeks, like marble, cold, but not hard, froze his mouth, as he kissed them in vain, she who would

never again hear him, never see him or speak to him, she had twice given him life. After giving him birth, she nourished, developed and strengthened him without help or fortune. He owed to her his intellectual power, the moral force of his judgment, the courage to undertake those lengthy works, which demand a continued effort, of which so few are capable. In what intimacy they had spent so many years, the busiest and the happiest of years! He remembered them now with a sorrow that only one word could express, which reechoed in the silence, like a groan.

"Mother!"

From afar he always felt her protection. She was a witness in his behalf. Now that witness was no more, and parts of his life lost their meaning, their value. With her he would bury his childhood and his youth, a whole period of days, clear as the expression of her eyes in life; a whole period of bright days that he had never found since and could never find again. And it was not he who had closed her eyes.

Was it not better that it was not he? Between them there was a fixed gulf. For a long time she had ceased to reproach him, but the direction of her thoughts was contrary to his, and their conversations, formerly so intimate, so deep, which were to him an inspiration, had for the most part, lost their power to interest and uplift him.

Many forgotten details now came back to his memory, expressions of sadness, of words, indirectly imploring. Yes, he had burdened her last months with a sorrow, the weight of which she bore without complaint, but which had finally crushed her. He could not mourn her without a secret remorse. Formerly, when he was still quite a young man, giving way to a naturally quick temper, which he had great difficulty in controlling, he had spoken rudely to her. What shame he had felt! But she, anxious not to wound his pride, came to him as soon as he was quiet, so that he might be spared the first step. Then he learned to despise his faults. And now they were separated forever without a true reconciliation.

He had reached the limit of his despair and was utterly crushed, when Elizabeth came in quietly to join him. She made him sit down, and too weary to resist, he meekly obeyed. Their thoughts so long separated, were at one in the same sorrow. It was one of those unfathomable griefs, in which the only comfort is to weep with another, and they could not mingle their tears. Stricken by the same blow, the embrace which would have brought them comfort, which so many friends can exchange, was forbidden to them. Thus Albert had a keener realization of his solitude.

"Nobody," he said to himself to arouse himself from his suffering, "can know what I have lost. I alone shall carry away the memory and knowledge of the will power which sustained her little body, so fragile beneath the sheet, the fire which animated those closed eyes. Anne could not come with me. She pities me from a distance, but she did not know her. She only knew of her unfriendliness toward her, and her rigid uprightness. Our love is disarmed before this dear, dead woman who belongs solely to me. And she who is here is nothing more to me than a stranger."

"The Stranger," shielded by the beloved presence of the dead, commenced to tell him in a low voice of the beginning of the illness and its successive phases. She told of the invalid's composure, her spirit of calm, her preparation, her desire to see her son again, the good-by she had sent him. She omitted everything that had reference to their separation and to her own devotion. She spoke with so much tact and filial love, that, as he listened, Albert was getting comfort in grief, which can come to us only by deepening our suffering. Overcome by his injustice, he murmured:

"You have taken my place. I know you have been a daughter to her. She said so in all her letters to me. Now I believe it. I thank you."

At these first words expressed with less indif-

ference, inspired by gratitude and decorum, Elizabeth felt she could no longer play her part. Tears and her weakness overcame her, but she gazed mechanically on the pillow, at the face so peaceful and serene, and took sudden comfort from it.

"I have caused her a great deal of sorrow," added Albert, making this confession almost in spite of himself, in response to what he had just heard.

Elizabeth had the strength to reply.

"She had confidence in you."

What did she mean by that? As he tried to interpret it, realizing that this tête-à-tête could not last much longer, she added:

"Come with me."

He followed her out of the room. She led him into the dining-room where Fanchette had laid a place for him.

"You must have some breakfast and warm yourself. It is very cold to-day. I am going back to the children. My friend Blanche Vernier has taken them to her house. I dare not bring them here. They are so little!"

"Marie Louise, Philippe," he said slowly, with a tenderness which made him tremble.

"But you can see them there, or at the home of my parents, or at Philippe Lagier's, as you like."

"At Philippe's."

"Very well. He is coming back. You can arrange with him."

She alone spoke, her mouth drawn, her face tense with the effort. He could only answer her. Philippe Lagier, faithful to his promise, came to relieve their embarrassment. As soon as he arrived, while he was trying, not without a painful acknowledgment, to understand their reciprocal emotions, and while Albert, suffering from hunger, could not make up his mind to eat, Elizabeth dressed herself to go out.

"Our friend," she said, turning towards her husband, "wishes to make all the arrangements. The funeral is the day after to-morrow. I shall be here. Au revoir."

The two men watched her as she was leaving, but did not mention her then. She went back into the death chamber, before she left the flat.

"Mother," she entreated, on her knees.

This cry expressed all the emotion she had felt, but had suppressed, on seeing her husband again; all the torture of love renewed by his actual presence. For the second time, the peace of death calmed her heart.

In the afternoon Albert saw his children at Philippe Lagier's. At first, in kissing them, in comparing them with the past — (on the road at Saint Martin d'Uriage he had held them for

only a moment in his arms) he experienced a sad joy which in his sorrowful condition pained him exceedingly, making him almost feverish. They surprised him by telling him the story of Mélusine and that of Lesdiguières.

"Who has told you these stories?"

"Mamma."

He had expected to find a carelessness, a feminine indulgence in the education of the two children, and he discovered instead an unexpected development and liveliness of intelligence and body to which he had contributed nothing. His desertion had not brought with it any loss to them. Instead of giving to Elizabeth the credit for it, he was irritated by it, because it seems cruel to us to discover how unimportant our influence may be.

The little boy was the first to tire of these effusions and put questions which referred to unimportant events in his life, which were insolvable to anyone who had not been directly concerned in them. Marie Louise herself even discontinued her playfulness and fancies, in order to explain to her brother that Papa could not know, that after all Papa was only an amateur father, who was very little in touch with their doings and movements. This was the meaning of her remarks which she uttered in her little decided authoritative voice. Mamma,— she never left them, except to look after Grandmamma.

"It is I who am the stranger here," thought Albert, suffering from such frankness.

The conquest of children, even of his own, could not be undertaken in an hour. He left Marie Louise and Philippe, his heart sick with disappointment, his nerves wrung. As soon as he no longer saw their dear little heads, he was filled with an immediate wish to bring them back, to keep them with him, without saying anything to her who had separated them. And when he came back to his mother's house he took with him an added regret, a deep melancholy which Anne's love could no more satisfy than it could his grief for his mother. He remained in the death chamber until evening, filled with despair in relinquishing one by one the ties which had exalted his life. The next day, spent in the same way, was even more cruel to him. He had a letter and a telegram from Anne who was awaiting him at Lyons. He read them absently and in a spirit of injustice! What could she know of his thoughts?

When on the morning of the funeral he again saw Elizabeth, who came to do the honors of the house, he wished he had been mistaken the evening before in finding that her expression was changed, that she was more awakened and bearing alone a sorrow as great as his own. She asked him complacently how he was, but pitied him with her looks, with her entire uneasy atti-

tude, friendly and dismayed at one and the same time. The Molay-Norrois arrived in their turn, and manifested an attitude of discreet sympathy toward their son-in-law. Then came other relations and friends. He was accepted once more by the family connections, relatives and the social circle with which he had believed all ties were broken. And in his great pride he endured it with bitterness.

The report was circulated in Grenoble that the death of Mme. Derize had reconciled the separated couple. Each one in the large crowd determined to watch for indications of it: to our utmost pity we add so much curiosity and such sudden indifference. The funeral procession was the object of attentive inspection to everyone, from Mme. Passerat, who, having loaned her motor to the invalid, prided herself upon a personal interest, to the little clerk Malaunay, who was concerned in it because of his bet. Elizabeth wished to take her place with the relations who were the chief mourners, behind her husband and her father who followed the hearse. By her presence, she showed besides her affection for the dead woman, her unwavering faithfulness to the name she bore.

The cemetery is only a short distance from the Cathedral, which is the parish church of the Boulevard des Adieux. They had only to go

through a gate in the old ramparts and along the avenue L'Ile Verte, all covered with dead leaves, which were crushed beneath the horses' hoofs and the feet of the mourners. The moment when the coffin is lowered into the ground, is one of the most anguish-filled that a loving heart has to bear. Albert instinctively lifted his hand to his eyes. A vision interposed between himself and his sorrow — that of Elizabeth overwhelmed. Did he remember that sentence in his diary: "She does not know my mother — she will never know her. If I were to have the misfortune of losing her, I should mourn for her alone."

On the return, although crushed, she received the procession of guests who came to pay their condolence calls, then went upstairs to give some orders to the old servant. Albert came back, accompanied by Philippe Lagier. Having completed her self-imposed duty, she greeted Philippe with an "Au revoir" and turning to her husband, said:

"Now good-by, keep up your courage."

Not understanding that that was final, but ill at ease, he asked:

"Are you going away?"

"Yes."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going home. Should I send the children to you?"

He hesitated — then in a dull voice, answered: "No."

She bowed. The door closed behind her. They would never see each other again.

As soon as she had gone, Albert made a few steps forward to call her back. What would he have said to her? Agitated, he walked up and down the room without speaking. In a few hours what emotions, what sorrow had he not experienced! His friend, motionless and silent, read with ease the succession of his thoughts, but by natural inclination had greater pity for the woman.

Fanchette came in to announce luncheon. Albert looked at her, seemed to be reflecting, and his decision made, declared in his clear voice:

"I am going to take you back to Paris."

This statement caused a shock at which she gave way as an old piece of furniture when its wood cracks. She crossed herself at once at the idea of going to that doomed city to wait upon a wicked woman, no doubt, and shaking her head from right to left, she stammered:

"No, no, M. Albert."

"Why will you not accept? Where will you go?"

"To Madame Elizabeth."

He frowned.

"You will leave me?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur Albert. Only there are the little ones, and then, Madame Elizabeth has been so kind. You don't know how she took care of madame. Day and night she was always here."

He cut these praises short.

"I know," he said.

Luncheon was hurried and silent. In the drawing-room to which the two men returned together, Albert more and more absorbed and bitter, at last giving full vent to the torrent of his impressions, admitted as if to himself,

"Yes, she has changed a great deal."

He added:

"Does she still refuse the allowance that I have sent to my solicitor every month?"

"Yes."

"I ought to have demanded a promise of acceptance from her. She is depriving me of helping to support my own children and without right. It is unfair."

Philippe, whose passion had purified itself in following the brave efforts of Elizabeth, and who was still under the spell of Madame Derize's last wishes, generously desired to bring about a reconciliation and continued the praises which Fanchette had begun. He told of the lives of the two women at Grenoble and Saint Martin, their intimacy, the sacred devotion of the younger, who

had changed the last year of the dead woman's life. In vain he was interrupted sharply with "I know, I know."

"No, you cannot know," he concluded, out of patience.

Albert, who had begun his walk again, stopped suddenly. His face wore that expression which it took on in anger, as his former violence overcame him again in the face of unbearable contradiction. However, he tried to master himself, and the insinuation which followed conveyed only wounding insolence:

"Then it was true what they wrote from Grenoble."

"What then?"

"That you were in love with my wife."

Philippe faced Albert's look, which was hard and imperious.

"Yes," he said calmly. "I have a worshipful admiration for Elizabeth. You may call it what you like."

"Take care, I shall know how to defend her."

"Against what and by what right?"

And influenced by his own unselfishness which inclined him to greatness of soul, desiring to expiate his former deception, he rose and held out his hand to his friend who did not refuse it:

"Come, Albert, how can we talk in this way — here."

Albert returned his handshake with that gratitude we feel toward those who have saved us from our own pettiness:

"I am unjust. They were infamous anonymous letters that I scarcely read. And then, her death has recalled so many memories that I believed to be remote, utterly silenced. A little flame has burst from the embers of my fireside."

"Can you not rebuild it?"

"No. But I could not see my mother on that bed, my wife, my children, without yearning for the right life which might have been mine. Do you understand? Elizabeth closed my mother's eyes; it is she who is bringing up Marie Louise and little Philippe alone. Yesterday she spoke to me with so much emotion and consideration. I was not alone in my grief. She has changed very much. She is more beautiful. And by a strange reaction, now that we are only strangers, the one to the other, it seems as though she had acquired all the characteristics which I formerly wished her to have."

"Strangers? It is not final. There is nothing final."

"Yes, death. Yesterday, I assure you, I envied my mother. Her face was so peaceful, so calm, so pure. One no longer suffers. And, above all, one does not make anyone else suffer. Yes, it is a solution. I have thought of it."

"Albert!"

"The day before yesterday, this morning again. It is a thought which will return to me. Elizabeth would be free. She deserves to be free, to be happy. I can do nothing now to make her so, and do not even wish that she should be: I am so selfish, so illogical."

"You are jealous of her — you still love her."

"I have loved her. The past overwhelms me here. I inhale it with every breath."

The conversation lagged. Philippe sought a word to turn it.

"When are you going away?" he asked, to change the subject.

"This evening."

"So soon. To Paris?"

"No. Anne is waiting for me at Lyons."

"Ah. When will you be back?"

"I don't know. Perhaps never. Like most men I have not ordered my life. I can change nothing, and when I cross this threshold, I feel like a miserable brute. It is odious."

He was exalted by these last words.

"And your children," said Philippe.

"Their mother is not so indifferent to me that I dare to take them from her. They have become her aim in life. How could I tear them away from her?"

And tortured by this question which repeated

itself over and over again in his mind, he spoke of it again.

"I am an outsider to my own family. How can I crush my wife by demanding this from her? And then her shortcomings are no longer anything compared with mine."

For the first time he condemned himself.

"Will you answer me?" asked Philippe brusquely. "Are you happy?"

Albert looked at him with an expression of bitter irony.

"I have lost my mother without seeing her again. I have lost my children, my home, my peace — A little while ago I spoke of dying. And you ask me if I am happy."

"I did not mean to offend you, Albert. There is such power in love that it longs to subordinate our greatest misfortunes — or it can give us strength to bear them. You have never known that love — or you no longer feel it."

"You are wrong: I still feel it. But love has never fulfilled a man's entire life."

"One last word. If you gave up . . . that love. . . ."

"It is useless to go on. I shall give it up only with my life. Just now, when I was speaking of dying, it was with her. She would follow me, no matter where, even to death."

"I understand. You are all in all to her, but

the contrary is not true. How you will both suffer, both of you!"

Albert took his friend's arm.

"Listen, I am not a coward," he said. "The choice of my life is not entirely in my own hands. Circumstances have brought it about that I am everything to Anne. I shall not give her up — no matter what happens."

"You prefer to sacrifice your children?"

"They have their mother."

"And their mother?"

No answer following the question, Philippe added:

"Shall you see her again before your departure?"

"No, what should I say to her? That she should break our legal ties, that she should try to remake her own happiness — she is so young, so lovely, so fascinating — and that I can never be anything to her again?"

"And that you are not happy?"

"What matter."

And those words fell like a stone into a dry well.

All afternoon Elizabeth waited at home for the uncertain event which would bring her husband to her. She could not believe that he would go away without seeing her again. Had she not helped his mother, shared his sorrow with him even

that morning? How could he be so cruel as to go away in this manner?

Night came, and she still held the hope, which was sustaining her, as she sat, ardent and motionless, in the same arm-chair, her ear strained to catch the slightest sound, her eyes vainly fixed on the door. She knew that he must take the 10:40 express. She knew where Anne de Sézery was. Finally she went into her children's room, saw that they were asleep, left them in their nurse's charge, and hastily putting on her hat and cloak, she hurried toward the station.

"If I went to look for him?" Mme. Derize had said one day.

Without pride, humiliated, conquered, here she was hastening to offer to the ungrateful faithless one, the heart which he had broken. She did not find him in the entrance hall. Not daring to cross the station to reach the platform, trembling with the emotion of her sudden impulse, she went out into the darkness and watched for the arrival of the carriages. At last she saw Albert and Philippe get out and she drew back, so as not to be seen. By the light of the lantern she distinguished Albert's set expression, as he paid the coachman. Ashamed of her weakness as soon as they had passed, she fled.

An individual, very smartly dressed — (one of those rich glove merchants of Grenoble who make

their large fortunes in Paris or Lyons and who, as a result, have acquired at a high price the right of treating women with familiarity) — after noticing her uneasy manner and her figure, followed her and dared to speak to her in the Rue Lesdiguières,— which is not well illuminated. He did not belong to the society she moved in and did not know her.

"Well, Madame, one must be guided by reason. The king is dead — long live the king!"

He laughed, he stared insolently at her, a little disturbed by the type of beauty he saw, which impressed him in spite of himself. Speechless, she was obliged to stop, and her mouth twisted itself without making a sound. At last she recovered herself and cried:

"Go away!"

Her frightened face, her terrified eyes more than her words, put the blackguard to flight. She dragged herself to her staircase, her limbs giving way under her. This last insult completed her humiliation. She fell into the deepest despair. She, in turn, envied the dead.

"It is over," she said to herself, "all over forever."

Reaching her room like an animal forced to its lair, crushed by so many nights of watching and fatigue, by the uselessness of so many efforts, rebelling against God's forgetfulness, she slid to

the floor at the foot of her bed, and there, collapsing, huddled up, through her sobs, she mechanically repeated the words which alone kept her from wishing for death, which, in spite of herself, linked her with life.

"Marie Louise, Philippe — my little ones. . . ."

PART IV

I

THE PALMS

At the end of March, in the mountainous districts, winter still holds sway. However, on Palm Sunday under a faint sun which gave to the pale sky the shade of a pearl in the light, Grenoble seemed to come to life again on its snowy horizon. Before the gate of the Cathedral, flower vendors, who had come from afar, even from beyond the Alps, as the harbingers of spring, showed and offered to the faithful who came to Mass, their bunches of green branches,— a little dead forest, scattered among the passersby, to be brought together again in the interior of the church, standing up bravely in the hands of all the worshipers. In anticipation they cried:

" Two sous for the blessed box-wood! "

Was it not a blessing in itself only to see that fresh verdure before the trees had even shown their buds?

Elizabeth, who was taking Marie Louise and Philippe to church (the latter having promised

to be good during the service) — stopped before one of the improvised stands to select three palms. Absentmindedly, she gave more sous than the ragged little brunette had asked for.

"Here, Madame,— you have given me too much."

"Keep the change. Where do you come from?"

"From Bardonèche in Italy."

"What is your name?"

"Luisa."

"And where are your parents?"

"They are very far from here."

Marie Louise, who was clasping in her left hand a piece of money for the collection, held it out to the stranger, who took it without noticing her, as she stared open-mouthed at the young woman.

"And me? You didn't say thank you to me," said the child, vexed that her generosity should go unnoticed.

Luisa burst out laughing. Despite her innocent eyes she was very knowing, and in her enthusiasm, speaking again in her native tongue, she pointed to the object of her admiration:

"*E bella come la Madona!*" (She is as lovely as the Madonna!)

Elizabeth's cheeks grew crimson. The compliment struck her like those flowers which are

thrown into one's face at flower fêtes, and which flatter and hurt one at the same time. She told her children to hurry.

"We shall be late — let us go in."

Philippe Lagier, who was standing on the square and had witnessed this scene, came up to her, but made no allusion to what he had just overheard, so as not to offend her. They were nearing the church steps. She placed her foot on the first step.

"Are you not coming in?"

"Yes. Does that surprise you? I love the Catholic services. They are incomparably poetical. To-day I shall go in to find the spring."

"Are you not seeking something else there?"

She smiled with that melancholy half-smile which harmonized so completely with her appealing expression. But she herself, had she confidence in God? She continued to mount the steps when he stopped her, not without visible emotion, but with great respect.

"Listen, Madame, I find you so changed. . . ."

She wished to joke.

"Changed? It seems that it must be for the better. I have just heard so."

"Yes. Italians have the privilege of crying out what we must content ourselves with thinking. It is not a question of that. The winter

has affected your health somewhat: it is evident — you must consult. . . ."

"No, no, I am very well, I assure you."

She disappeared into the lobby. Abashed for a moment, he decided to follow her and sit a few rows behind her during Mass, so that she would not know of his presence. While her children's clothes were very carefully looked after, she was wearing a modest black dress, which must have seen hard service and was beginning to look shiny. As she had drawn her mourning veil over her shoulder in front, he could see her blonde hair, of such childish fairness, so delicate, so silky, and a corner of her white neck. When she rose or knelt, in accordance with the rites of the service, he noticed the flexibility of her movements and that suave grace, as of a young girl with whom one could not dare to associate impure ideas. At intervals her profile was invisible, then again he would catch a glimpse of it, like a bright spot between her dark hat and dress. How little she resembled the blooming, but apathetic, unresponsive wife of Albert Derize! Sorrow, loneliness, the care of disposing of her time, had sharpened her features, and even the lines of her figure. Her slender body swayed like the long stalk of a flower. In her slimness, which began to grow alarming, she retained that look of youth, which she formerly had as a result of lack of all occupa-

tion, and which now suggested a sort of recoil from the disillusioning revelations of life.

"She will break down," thought Philippe. "She will die of it. What can be done to save her?"

He was no longer actuated by selfish motives. In his heart, devoid of faith, but eager, she was his religious ideal, the Madonna with whom the little Italian had compared her.

The winter following Mme. Derize's death — (one of those long winters to which the region of the Alps is exposed) — had not been kind to Elizabeth. She had lost her firmest support, the contagious courage which emanates from calmness in time of trial, and also the last effective tie which linked her with her husband. Thus she had followed a more difficult path. As that plain at Grenoble, surrounded by mountains, appears colder in its circle of ice, so she felt desolation and loneliness about her like high walls. Mme. Molay-Norrois, it is true, realizing this dangerous state of mind, had given more expression to her maternal tenderness, but in the way natural to her passive nature, and rather by lamentations than by actions. Was she not — excellent woman — monopolized by her husband, who was embittered by illness and was accepting old age without resignation? He had always exercised the despotism of his pleasure at home. But his

bad temper was preferable to his infidelity. He might not have rebelled against the effects of old age, if he could have endured them with Mme. Passerat, instead of being aggravated by knowing she was taking advantage of her slimness to wear more youthful clothes, and that by a bold maneuver she had just taken away the attentions of M. de Vimelle from the rich Mme. Bonnard-Basson. Providence was watching over her in all her ventures. This last conquest aroused a sort of exasperation in M. Molay-Norrois which helped the circulation of bad blood and increased his bad temper. What comfort could anyone find in such a home?

Elizabeth had not given up her self-imposed duty of giving her children the elements of their education. Marie Louise was almost nine years old and Philippe was six. She must think of their futures. She desired a busy, well-filled youth for them, remembering the weakening relaxation she had known in hers, and hoped to be able to accustom them to find their happiness in every-day things. But her moods, even with them, were now more changeable. She varied from prostration to feverish desire to amuse and occupy herself. Must one not live every day? She cried, she laughed nervously over nothing. Consumed with fever, she spent too much energy, and then fell back into a state of languor. She

tried to follow, as far as possible, the plans she had laid out for herself, but advanced unevenly, sometimes slowly, sometimes hurriedly.

Out of society, because of her mourning and her sorrow, she did not care to receive anyone, except her friend Blanche Vernier, whose discreet devotion was restful, but without influence, and whose four children were in themselves quite a company for play and study. She had even been obliged to reject the attentions of M. de Vimelle who had suddenly begun to take her under his protection. Wearied by the vulgarity of his mistress and the thankless rôle that she made him fill he had thought of taking an honorable revenge by paying attention to a woman whom nobody defended. His natural vanity gave him erroneous ideas of his own value. Defeated by Elizabeth he fell back on the mature, lively and more accommodating Mme. Passerat, the conquest of whom would be attended with more publicity. He avenged himself for his setback by reporting to society the infrequent visits of Philippe Lagier to the Rue Haxo. Mme. Molay-Norrois, told by her husband, warned her daughter of this.

Elizabeth was indignant. Upon introspection, however, she found she might reproach herself. It was true, these visits of Philippe were more pleasant to her than she had admitted to herself. He came in shyly, afraid of not being received,

and began by talking commonplaces. Shyness in a man of his worth and self-possession is in itself a homage. Then he changed his tone, and spoke with all his wit which was quick and pointed, and which, under the influence of a new tenderness, opened out and became more scintillating. What he said — apart from the lasting pleasure which his words gave, and which helped to make her forget the limitations of her life,— revealed a silent adoration that could never again be directly expressed. In that sort of mystic exaltation which comes with a love that is repressed, he cleverly managed to encourage in her a hope, which all reason and his soul denied.

As a self-imposed task, he wrote very regularly to his friend. At first Albert had sent only hasty replies; but little by little he acquired the habit of confidence. His bitter critical letters did not breathe happiness, and now he began to ask for news of his children. Thus the tie broken by the death of Mme. Derize was cleverly mended by Philippe Lagier's sincere friendship. Elizabeth, in the selfishness of her love, was not conscious that she had made such use of this friendship. Yet after rebelling against her mother's warning, she was guided by it. Besides actual honesty, there is an honesty of appearances of which women of to-day think very little. Above all, she had not the right to take advantage of a

sentiment, which, however respectful, had its origin in a generous devotion, and in which she took a certain pride, owing to her deserted state — so harmful to a woman in her prime.

Philippe, delicately warned by her, came to the Rue Haxo only at rare intervals. It was a cruel deprivation for him. There he had really spent intense hours, realizing the greatest of all joys,— the joy of sacrifice. So, not having seen Elizabeth for almost a month, it was excusable that he should stop in the Cathedral Square at the hour of High Mass, in the hope of meeting her there; and he was better able than anyone who saw her daily to notice how thin she was, and all the symptoms of illness that she showed.

During the service he was wondering how he could help her. A change of air, a trip to Provence, to one of those little places, where one need only open his eyes to take in the joy of light and free space! Yes, but she was obstinately refusing Albert's assistance, and her own small resources limited her to a modest life without luxury. Perhaps that would decide the Molay-Norrois to take her back with them. How could they help noticing how she was fading? But how could Albert have gone away after being struck with her new fascination, her frailness? So he looked at her with pity. His prayers dwelt upon her. She was the tabernacle, which, like

an offering, held the pure wish for self-sacrifice for which he was indebted to her.

Elizabeth tried — not less vainly, to follow the service. A memory and a fear returned to her successively with her prayers. The memory carried her back ten years to the time of her engagement on a Palm Sunday. It was on a sunny April day. But she felt no pleasure in being less than twenty and in love. Albert had gone to this same church with her and her parents. The vendors were offering their green branches too. Thoughtlessly she dwelt on the verge of an emotion, to which another, better informed or more farsighted, would have given herself joyfully. Now she understood — after ten years — what an opportunity for uplifting their hearts she had lost in accepting with indifference that happy coincidence of the reawakening of nature, symbolized by the religious festival and the birth of their love.

" Look," he had said, " at all those branches of box-wood on the ground, for you — it seems as if you were walking in spring."

" Yes, it is Palm Sunday," she had answered.

This very simple response dispelled surprise. Was not love something which was due to little girls, and which admits of no pain? Her fiancé had then admired that tranquillity which contained the germ of their separation. How should she have expected to be deceived before

understanding the care we must take of our happiness? Why had no one aroused her,— then, while there was still time — from that apathy which makes us sink into the beaten path, and does not allow us to reach the height from which we see the light and a broad vision? She would at least know how to save her children from her short-comings. They would not need despair to open their eyes to the sorrows of life. She would preserve their strength of feeling, their responsiveness, and they should be like young armed warriors, not heedless and enervated.

Would she have that power? That very morning, as she was dressing herself, she noticed how pale and thin she was, and before she could arrange her hair, she had been obliged to begin again several times, her arms heavy and stricken with an inexplicable weakness. Philippe Lagier had certainly noticed it. The remark of such a keen observer, coming back to her mind, startled her. Perhaps she was in danger. But what did a more or less long life matter to her? The last picture she had of Albert was that of a traveler, who sets out without looking back, without even suspecting the humiliated love, sobbing in the darkness a few feet away. Then why should one want so much to live? Marie Louise and Philippe, her own flesh, her blessing, and her new hope — Albert would have them. It was his

right. After her death, he would marry that woman. And that woman would become the mother of her children. Ah, no, no, she could not conceive of that without a shudder of horror. She must live; at any price, she must live.

"Mamma, what is the matter with you?" asked Marie Louise, bending over her.

While the faithful worshiper had risen to receive the priest's blessing, Elizabeth remained kneeling, her head hidden, her shoulders shaking. The child repeated her question, and slipped her hand softly under her mother's arm to pat her cheek.

"Why are you crying? Philippe is good — and I love you so much."

For the child's sake, Elizabeth calmed herself at once. She drew down her veil to hide her wet eyes, and standing erect, she smiled.

"There is nothing the matter with me."

With this effort, she returned to her prayer. It was a desperate, exigent supplication which she addressed to God like an accusation:

"You would not allow that — you would not allow that!"

Comforted little by little, she promised herself to consult a doctor, to take care of herself, to fight against her illness. Philippe, who had noticed her emotion, dared not approach her, as she went out. His look, as he bowed to her, was

filled with so much respect and compassion, that it made her uneasy. At the foot of the steps, little Luisa waved her sheaf of branches, crying,

"The blessed box, two sous."

When she recognized the young woman, she stopped short and forgot her sales.

"*Primavera!*" (Spring!), she said.

Elizabeth, touched and comforted by this spontaneous admiration, gave her a little piece of silver. But she shook her head — For her, there was no more spring.

II

PHILIPPE LAGIER'S MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY

Two or three days after Palm Sunday, Philippe Lagier, during a visit to M. Molay-Norrois, learned that the doctor had prescribed absolute rest for Elizabeth, and considering her to be, if not in actual danger — at any rate, in a serious state of decline which he must check at all costs, had her under his close observation. He hesitated as to what he should do then decided to let Albert know. Instead of receiving the answer he expected, he saw his friend come to his house. That was an indication of very keen anxiety. He had not been wrong in keeping up the young wife's hope: what unselfishness friendship demanded!

Albert, through his intermediary, begged, in the interests of his children, that she would grant him an interview, which she refused. Her illness, depressing her, made her less accessible to any attempt of reconciliation. "Is he free?" she had asked. And, as she could not be answered in the affirmative, of what benefit would be this meeting, which would only be painful, and

could not, in any way, modify their respective positions? Did not their discretion consist in remaining apart? Thus set aside, he begged her to accept his help. A change of air would do her good, would be good for Marie Louise and her brother. When Philippe brought him another refusal, he flew into a passion, which terrified his friend, who tried in vain to keep him within bounds. Did he not speak of taking up the suit again, of claiming his paternal rights, of again suing for divorce?

On the following day, he acted on his own behalf. It was cruel and yet good for him. He went to the Saint-Roch cemetery where his parents, whom death had not separated, were lying side by side; — to the city park, where he wandered a long time watching the children at play, not knowing that his own were invited to Blanche Vernier's house; and to the Rue Haxo to look at the closed windows. Rejected everywhere, out of favor with fate, he wandered about Grenoble like a stranger, who has seen all the sights and does not know what to do. Before leaving, he excused himself to Philippe.

"I was wrong yesterday, you must understand me — I am sowing only suffering and evil about me — And it is unavoidable: I can do nothing for it. It is better for me never to return. You will come to see me in Paris?"

"I shall," said Philippe, "but what have you decided?"

"Nothing!"

"You will remain like this — without an official separation?"

"Yes. I promised my mother that I would never seek a divorce against Elizabeth's wish, and Anne despises our laws."

The last volume of the "History of the Peasant" had appeared the previous month, and drawing attention to the whole work, it was the subject of numerous reviews and even heated discussions in the press. In Parliament it had inspired the plan of a bill relating to unseizable family property. The death of an old statesman, forgotten because of his almost interminable old age, had caused a vacancy in the Academy. The newspapers, influenced by such brilliant success, had sympathetically mentioned the candidacy of Albert Derize, without consulting him. To Philippe's questions, he had only replied:

"In my position, it is impossible. And what do honors matter to me?"

He left with his friend a copy of his book for Marie Louise, with an appropriate inscription. Through the child, he saw Elizabeth. The invalid plunged into the reading of it. She discovered therein a sharper and more bitter tone, an authority which asserted itself without discretion,

almost with insolence. The conclusions concerning the importance of patrimony, the family, the freedom to make one's will, the account of rural domain, and of tradition, all accorded with the strength of the first volumes, perhaps with less force of persuasion, but a more studied power, and in places, a mood of irritation which revealed an eloquence, both high-spirited and disillusioned.

Elizabeth's health triumphed over that crisis which was the result of an excess of moral fatigue — but she remained subject to nervous trouble, anæmic and susceptible to all injurious influences. Her doctor, who knew her from childhood, analyzed her case as a psychologist, and was not satisfied with her condition.

"This state of uncertainty brings about an irregularity of all the vital functions. A decided position, final separation, divorce would be preferable. After the shock, she could again take up a normal life. She is so young."

But she would hear nothing of this. She would wear herself out without improvement, as long as her strength lasted. Philippe, allowed to visit her, saw the "History of the Peasant" on a little table next to the sofa.

"You have read it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"It is very fine."

She added, as if speaking of someone else:

"Men can change their feelings without changing their thoughts. Women, no!"

It was she, who was now generalizing. He appeared to be meditating, as if weighing a difficult case, and at the end of his reflections, remarked simply:

"I believe he still loves you."

"Please —"

"I am sure of it. And I know how to give him back to you."

Half reclining on the cushions, she sat up, her cheeks flaming, her eyes shining with fever.

"I beg of you to give up that idea. He has wrecked his home. It was his affair to rebuild it. And now —"

"Now."

She allowed herself to fall back.

"It is too late," she said.

Philippe, ever eager to serve her, was painfully affected by this evidence of her state of disenchantment, and changed the conversation, which was painful to her.

"What are your plans? Shall you go to Provence into the sunshine?"

"No, spring is there. As soon as the warm weather comes, we shall go to Saint Martin d'Uriage."

"That is the mountains, and you may find it

cold there again. You take very poor care of yourself."

She tried to make a slight motion of indifference, but her arm was too weak. As if the future no longer interested her, she explained, with that smile of conscious invalids, which permits them to mitigate the strictness of their doctors' orders:

"I shall soon be better, you will see. My health is good. In any case I have made my will."

"It is absurd! Why these gloomy thoughts?"

"I confide my children to the care of my mother. You understand I do not wish that woman — You will help mamma to put all obstacles aside, will you not?"

"Oh, Madame —"

"Will you promise me? Albert is your friend. He will listen to you."

Philippe rose, adding the melancholy of his hopeless love to his pity, and no longer able to master his emotion:

"No, no, Madame. That will not be."

The next day, using the end of his legal Easter holiday, he took the train to Paris, without letting anyone know of his journey. This absence, which would scarcely be remarked, lasted for several days. At Grenoble nobody suspected it. The

lawyer had never been very confidential, and his goings and comings helped to preserve the mystery. As soon as he came back he went to the Rue Haxo. Elizabeth, with languor and an unsteady step, was slowly taking up her routine again. At the end of his visit, which was very short, he put this question to her:

"If they separated, what would you do?"

She evaded giving an answer.

"I do not know," she said.

"If he were free — if he came back to you."

She fixed him with her eyes, enlarged by illness, and lit up with a somber flame:

"I no longer believe that possible."

Scarcely had she said these words, than she felt as if she had refused an offer from Albert. In despair, she recalled the promise that she had sworn at Mme. Derize's death bed. She had said she would forgive, forgive without restriction. And now that she was recovering she had said "Too late," which is the excuse of the weak. When Philippe had gone, she reproached herself, but she was so weak. Had she not suffered too much, waited too long? Had she not been sufficiently humiliated by life? When a person had begun to enter on the path of abnegation and sacrifice, did he never stop, must he build an everlasting Calvary? To escape, to come back, to attempt to find personal happiness elsewhere, that

she could not do; but, like an overladen beast, who resists an ascent, she felt neither the strength, nor the courage to go on. She did not know that one walks much longer when overtired, than before becoming fatigued. It is always at the end that an ascent demands the greatest effort.

After a brief glimpse of spring, the wind and rain had taken possession of Grenoble. One could hardly distinguish the neighboring mountains under the leaden sky. Thus the trip to Saint Martin was delayed, although Elizabeth was anxious to go away, and was eager for the open air. Encouraged by the change in the weather, she began her preparations on the 1st of May. A letter, which she received on the 8th, addressed to Mme. Albert Derize, née Molay-Norrois, Boulevard des Adieux, from whence it came back to her, altered her plans. It was a letter with the English postmark, with the address in a handwriting not entirely unknown to her, and which at once disquieted her. She held it in her hand defiantly before opening it, and did not decide to break the seal without a presentiment of evil. She was not mistaken: the foreign paper, those straight flowing letters, which she had seen before, had already broken up her life. She turned the pages which were numerous, and read the signature: "Anne de Sézery." Then she let the letter drop. How could she have had

the audacity to write to her? By what right did she inflict such an insult upon her? Crushed, she sat down, but involuntarily looked on the ground. At last she bent over and picked up the paper which lay there. A few months ago she would have decided not to read it. But she had nothing more to hope, nor to fear. In certain excesses of sorrow, we lose the narrow sense of our dignity which we reserve for our intimate life alone. She began reading this strange letter with suspicion and aversion, ready at the least stinging word to discontinue and not to finish it. She read to the end without stopping.

"London, 6th May, 1907.

"Madame:

"When you receive this letter I shall have left for a far distant country, where no one can follow me and from which I shall never return. That is my excuse for addressing you, and it is — believe me — your obligation to read this letter in its entirety.

"As a result of living in England, I have acquired the habit of candor. I therefore did not want an intermediary between us, for fear of wounding you. The circumstances in which we find ourselves are beyond the pettiness of delicacy, and demand courage, above all things. I must have more than you. If I speak to you of certain

things of the past, it is that they may be useful to you in the future. If you have to make a decision, you must be informed.

"I can do nothing more for his happiness, and you, you can do much. That is the whole truth, and the truth must inspire us. I loved him before you did, and more than any other woman has ever loved him. That is the pride I shall take with me to the end of the world. He was my sole thought. When I met him after ten years' absence, I hoped at first to make a loyal friendship of this unusual love. But you did not welcome me kindly, and he himself did not help me. It is so difficult, especially in France, to fathom and to govern these affairs of the heart. After your departure from Paris, I awaited your return. You did not come back, and I believed you and he were finally separated. He was unhappy, and on my account. What could I do, since I loved him? In England we weigh our resolutions for a long time, and then our decision is final. With you, uncertainty may last for a lifetime.

"I was resigned to being socially ostracized. His social convictions, your children, my family traditions, the lack of a religious belief which I had lost, all united to keep us from a legal union. In my own conscience, I was his wife, the true companion of his heart and mind: little else mattered to me, but to live in harmony with him. Last

autumn I knew that even his happiness was threatened. It was some days before his mother's death: he had met his children on a path in the country of his own childhood. The children: I did not understand the power of that tie which cannot break. How could I realize it? I never knew my mother, and my father was not concerned about my affection.

"The death of Mme. Derize contributed still more to separate our thoughts. He bore his sorrow alone, and I could not speak to him of her without irritating him. It is very wretched for a woman to remain a stranger to a large part of the life of her. . . . I was going to say, her husband. He certainly endeavored to lessen the pain he was causing me. His sorrow was like a wall between us, and there must be no walls when two people love each other. Then I fell ill this winter. Deprivations, the struggles of my first years in London, had left no visible traces on me, only a little inward wear and tear and a weakened power of resistance. I believed that love would give me back my youth. In my first illness, in the first breach of our intimacy, I noticed signs of those hard years in my face. And, as if I longed madly to destroy myself, I showed them to him one by one. I am no longer a young woman like you, and the days count for me. You will understand

from this confession whether I have promised myself to be sincere.

"Our life was apparently unchanged. During his silences I followed the trend of his thoughts. The dead and the living, the past and the future were calling him to Dauphiné. We were only in accord when we traveled. One should always travel when one lives outside of ordinary life, but one cannot always travel. From certain fragments of sentences, from his absentmindedness, from his last visit to Grenoble, I felt that he had found a new woman in you. By an unexpected reaction, it was you who now became my rival. I had not believed that you would be so faithful, brave, resolute in hope, and so capable of making the most of unhappiness. The physical memory I retained of you, had very often been sufficient to inspire me with fear. Since you compelled me to admire you from afar, I detested you until the day I felt — so unhappily — that you could still do what I could no longer do, and that I should have to tell you so.

"His last book opened my eyes. I sought its pages in vain for that delightful weakness of pity, that bending of the will which I had found in all the writers whom Fate or their own desires had led to unconventional living. It treated only of family, of the home, of hierarchy, of endurance,

of tradition, and of the dead. He expresses his deepest thoughts in his books. He put ours only into a 'Schumann,' which is heartrending. Finally, the newspapers spoke of his candidacy for the Academy. I was afraid of hearing it confirmed, when one day two friends, whom he esteemed highly, paid him a visit. He said nothing to me about the interview, the purpose of which was all too clear. I asked him about it, and he put me aside at the first word. No doubt your separation, the contrast between his convictions and his books, rendered any step difficult. From his hostile air, I knew he was ambitious, but weary.

"So everything was in league against me. He believed he had duties, as if there were any in love. One day he suggested that we should die together, when the slightest happiness is sufficient to restrain us. From that time, I began to think of disappearing. What should I do, if I did not go? I owe my practical judgment to English life. As he cannot forget you, neither you nor his children, since my love is no longer sufficient for him, my departure will give him back to his natural destiny, and I have accustomed myself to go on journeys alone. At another time he would have noticed my preparations, which I delayed, always awaiting a more favorable opportunity. Yesterday — on a rainy

morning — he was away for the entire day. I took the train from London, and this evening I embark at Liverpool. He will never know where I am going. I have taken every precaution that it should remain a mystery.

"It seems to me that these explanations should fix our respective positions exactly, and that a warning should make it clearer for you what course to pursue. The harm I have done you, I did not wish to do, and you are repaying me without wishing it any more than I. Forget that. Forget me. One does not think of death when one holds life in armfuls, and when one hopes for love. May yours, Madame, inspire you, as mine has inspired me.

"ANNE DE SÉZERY."

Despite her despair and her spirit of sacrifice, this letter still implied that apologetic judgment of which we can so seldom divest our actions, even our noblest and most unselfish actions. Anne had not reached that thought of flight of her own volition. The intervention of another had pointed out that sorrowful course to her. But what is a thought in comparison with its realization? She had also omitted to mention that the illness to which she alluded had brought with it a gloomy mood, very unfavorable to love, and that of Albert's affection could have been touched

by it, it would have required all the susceptibility of a passion lacking in trust to recognize it through unceasing devotion. No realization is more heart-rending than that of kindness, when we are expecting another sentiment.

Elizabeth had no doubts as to what she had just read. The sincerity of the accent, and that generosity went to her heart, even though the tone of protection wounded her. She was trembling from head to foot. Forgetting her abhorrence of all contact with the woman who had stolen her husband from her, she wished to reread Mlle. de Sézery's letter. In place of her old rebellion, the second reading made her so jealous that her nerves were shaken — not because of that physical jealousy which is less tyrannical in a woman than in a man, and which, moreover, she had understood so late, but rather a kind of mystic envy, of holy anger against that rival who had claimed to surpass her in loving: a fever of sacrifice.

Anne's disappearance was not the end. Free, Albert could, must rebuild his home and come back. She would consent to forgive him; yes, she would forgive him unreservedly. But what was this pardon in comparison with the other's sacrifice? Mme. Derize had told her one day that she was going to look for her son. Well, she would not be behind her in generosity. She

would not wait till Albert returned, she would not speak of forgiveness. She would go herself and take her place again. And what humiliation to go and ask for that place still warm with love for another woman! Could she really submit to it? One needs more courage for ordinary circumstances of life in common, than for great departures and heroic actions. Well, she would have that courage. No sacrifice would be comparable to hers.

A mistress can prove her love by turning willingly from a life which she is hindering, and whose happiness no longer depends upon her. She, the wife, must show hers by her firm adherence to an attachment which is indissoluble. So Elizabeth, wounded and exalted, roused herself to vitalize her inactivity.

III

ELIZABETH IN PARIS

She wisely delayed her departure for three weeks. Should not the days fall like spadefuls of earth upon a coffin, after a separation which had been cruel? Philippe Lagier, whose rôle she did not suspect, had come to tell her of Albert's useless voyage to London.

"It will not be long before he returns," he assured her in a tone of mingled bitterness and irony. "Leave him the customary time for half-mourning."

But she did not confide any of her plans to him. As the days passed, she began to fear, and her hesitation took hold of her again. Was it not better to wait? Could Anne de Sézery be so quickly forgotten? The memory of Mme. Derize, the future of her children, an overwhelming desire for sacrifice and her love, drove her on, impelled her to go. Yes, she would spare her husband the first step, she would go to find him, she would bring him back. That magnanimous decision affected her like a fever, and so com-

pletely filled her mind, that she did not think of conjecturing the welcome she would receive.

At the end of May, fearing some new journey of Albert's, or the negative influence of solitude, she determined to go. Old Fanchette, sharing the secret, looked with terror at the open trunk.

"Paris! Paris!" she muttered, as if she were naming some beast of the Apocalypse.

"Sh!" said Elizabeth, not having told Marie Louise and Philippe, who chattered too much about the object of the journey, on which she was taking them as useful allies. The two were just disputing about the matter.

"I tell you we are going to Saint-Martin."

"Certainly not. We are going by train," stated the more competent little girl.

And their mother, as she listened, was laying her finest black dress in the top tray, arched so as not to crush it.

Once in the compartment, a second class carriage, the little ones could not restrain their joy.

"It is Paris!" cried the big boy, as if he had solved a delicate problem. And the magic syllables fell from his little round mouth like a golden ball.

Marie Louise looked attentively at her mother, and then came and laid her face against hers. Their cheeks were of the same delicacy, and their fair hair mingled.

"Shall we see papa?" asked the child.

"Yes."

"And we shall stay with him?"

"No, darling. We shall take him away."

"Ah, all the better."

And the little one added:

"Jeanne and Renée de Crozet will not be able to make fun of us at school now."

"Make fun of you?"

"Yes, because we had no papa."

Elizabeth passed her hand through the childish curls.

"Be calm. They won't make fun of you when he is there."

She smiled. She was sure of her victory. The fact of being active, the movement of the train as it proceeded, gave her a foretaste of heroism like that which a sheltered troop feels in war, before passing through the firing-line.

In Paris she settled with her children in a boarding-house on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, almost opposite Saint Germain des Prés.

"And the Luxembourg garden?" asked Marie Louise, who, after two years, still remembered her walks.

Trembling, Elizabeth took the children there. He crossed it every day, no doubt, and they might meet him there. She hastened to return to the

hotel. The day after her arrival she dictated this letter to her daughter:

"My dear Papa:

"I am in Paris with mamma, and Philippe too. We are here to see a doctor. But you will come to see us. We must go away soon, so you must hurry.

"I send you kisses. Your daughter,

"MARIE LOUISE."

The excuse about the doctor had not been invented. The young woman had wished to take advantage of her trip to consult a specialist about the nervous temperament of the little girl, who was strong, but too impressionable, perhaps because she had understood her mother's sorrow, and the peculiarity of her childish life. The doctor had comforted her, advising the fresh air of the country and very little study. Then he turned abruptly to her:

"But you yourself, Madame? Take care; you must take care of yourself."

"Oh, I . . ." Elizabeth said indifferently.

"Yes, you. Let me examine you."

After the examination he said:

"Nothing wrong with the heart. But no regularity in the pulse. One minute it is flying along, and the next it stops, and one no longer

feels it. You have changed very much. I know, I know. The cure? It does not depend upon me."

"On me, then?"

The old man, who knew something about the Derize separation, concluded with these words.

"Hurry up and be happy. . . ."

Albert received his daughter's letter in the Rue Bara. He had not changed his apartment. Before Anne's mysterious flight he went to dine every evening at Rue Cassini, and every morning she came to lunch with him. He often took her to the restaurants on the Boulevard Montparnasse, which look like tea gardens in the suburbs, and are much frequented by artists. When spring came, he rented at Ville d'Avray on the Sèvres, a little villa hidden among the trees and covered with clematis, and there their intimacy was more complete. It was when he came in on the evening of the 6th of May to see about their future establishment, that he found this brief farewell left with the porter of the Rue Cassini.

"My life belonged to you as long as it could give you happiness. Now that it can no longer do so, and that I am quite sure of it, forgive my taking my liberty once more. Good-by forever.

"ANNE."

He was prostrated by this departure. The silent discords which since his mother's death had slipped between them, certain disillusioned looks which he had noticed in the drooping corners of the lips and the long narrow eyes of his lost love, without attaching much importance to them, and that want of confidence which she had always expressed regarding happiness, even at the time of their most ardent passion, warranted him in imagining the worst catastrophes. He was able to reach the Gare du Nord in time to jump on an evening train. The next morning — and what a rough crossing he had — he arrived at Charing Cross and drove immediately to Bladen Lodge, Miss Pearson's home. If Anne were alive, she must have taken refuge there. In her hours of sadness, she was always homesick for English life. When he ran up the doorstep, he thought he could divine her presence from the other side of the walls. At the door, he parleyed in very bad English. Miss Pearson was not up at that time, had given no orders. He presented his card, and waited for a long time in a drawing-room, whose windows looked out on a miniature park. He seemed able to recall there the presence of his Anne to whom Bladen Lodge was home.

"She is here, I shall see her," he repeated with a beating heart.

At last Miss Pearson came to join him. After a few polite remarks and explanations, he at once asked for Mlle. de Sézery, as if he had a right to her and all hypocrisy was out of place, under the circumstances.

"She is not here," said Miss Pearson, whose frank determined face was severely set this morning.

"I beg of you, Madame, to tell me where I can find her."

"But I do not know."

"You do not know? But you have seen her. . . . Where is she hidden? I have the right to know. You have not seen her? . . . Well . . . But you understand that I have everything to fear."

Miss Pearson realized the anguish which the man was suffering, and putting aside her reserve, she betrayed as much of her secret as she could:

"You need have no fear for her life, Monsieur. Now it is useless to ask me any more. I shall not answer you."

He tried, however, eloquently, passionately, despairingly, but obtained no information. The momentary pity of Miss Pearson had not affected her loyalty. He left without any further information. But what he had heard agreed with his expectations. Anne had fled from France. Anne was in England — perhaps at Bladen Lodge, but

he could not be sure. Every day he used his intelligence and his strength, which was exhausting itself in the unprofitable rôle of detective; he had the surroundings of Bolton Gardens watched; visited M. Portal, who knew nothing, asked about Lord Howard, who was shooting on his estate in Scotland: in his distress, he imagined that Mlle. de Sézery, in leaving him thus, and not revealing her whereabouts, must have tired of her irregular living, meant to take up her life alone and live it according to her own fancies. Broken down by fatigue, he rested only a few hours in the evening, having gained nothing from his search. The next day he took it up again, assisted by a French detective, and setting out in another direction, he took the train for Liverpool. He looked on the registers at the steamship offices, through the lists of passengers going to America or India, but Anne's name was not to be found among them. She had been able to disguise herself. He questioned the clerks. How could they recall a face, a woman's figure in such a crowd? However, there was a Miss Lewisham with auburn hair. And golden eyes? They did not know at the offices whether or not she had golden eyes. He went back by way of Southampton, began the same questioning with as little success. Anne was lost to him.

By a phenomenon, usual in the history of pas-

sions, he restored to the absent one all the attributes which, little by little he had taken from her. Their last months together had not been pleasant. Anne had been tired and generally sad after her illness. She reproached herself everlastingly about her youth and her complexion, which were fading. He patiently bore these complaints, which were the result of an excess of sensitiveness and of that melancholy natural to those who, too early in life and without preparation, have endured the miseries and humiliations of fate. But no man who is at work can entirely suppress the boredom he meets with in his home, nor the displeasure he experiences in listening to lamentations. Their intellectual life alone retained the power of a mutual bond. A chapter of the "History of the Peasant," the biography of some great man, provided material for endless discussions. Still he did not relinquish any of his ideas concerning the social order, nor did he know how to convince her of his view-point. Pure lines of classic art, the positive force of experience attracted him, when, on the contrary, she was enthusiastic about elaborate forms, and avoided realities for all Utopias. At intervals, wearied by their useless clash of opinion, they appealed to each other through their former love, and grew tender, not daring to admit to themselves that it was a compromise. And too often Albert absently

went off in a direction where she could not follow him, and which she very well knew. Now, deserted by her, he did not wish to owe to her his freedom for which he had often longed, and he fancied himself linked to the memory of Anne.

The Avenue of the Observatory and the mysterious little Rue Cassini, the Allée de Montemart at the Bois de Boulogne, the road which runs along the pond of La Reine Blanche to Chantilly, saw him pass on his pilgrimage. In these appropriate frames he could better call to mind the long golden eyes, the sorrowful mouth, and the step, light and weary at the same time. In place of spring which was blooming everywhere, he wished for autumn, whose pathetic grace had so often caressed them. Thus do our emotions crush us as they die away, and he mistook the sweetness of having loved for love itself.

Marie Louise's letter came as an untimely interruption in his sorrow. For six months or perhaps a year, his thoughts had never been so far from his own family, who had selected a very bad time to come to him. Why did they worry him in his solitude? He could not ignore this call, but it was against his will to reply to it. He asked for Mme. Derize at the boarding house. He was shown into the drawing-room on the ground floor, which overlooked Saint Germain-des-Prés, whose pointed steeple and old gray

stones he could see between the branches of the chestnuts, already in full bloom. It was a peaceful retreat from the noise of Paris. Elizabeth sent her two children in as scouts. How could he receive them badly? Marie Louise told him about the visit to the doctor, and Philippe informed him of his interest in the botanical gardens. When, in her turn, his wife appeared, with a dismayed expression, he cruelly assumed his unresponsive manner.

"She knows I am deserted," he thought with irritation. "She is coming to seek me. She is triumphant."

In seeing him again she experienced neither exaltation nor the hope of departure. She was conscious of that impression of failure which all know, who, full of their subject and eager to express it, meet with indifference or hostility; their tongues are no longer persuasive, and their words grow weak. She explained this journey as well as she could.

Although he evidenced that he was distant and that this intrusion into his life displeased him, he was more struck than he showed with the change he saw in Elizabeth's features and the thinness of her body. One would have thought, with her flexibility and pallor which made her appear taller, that she was going to break at the slightest blow of fate. He was angry with her for that

frailty which attracted him irresistibly, and at the same time alarmed him. In his masculine selfishness, still making her suffer, and already foreseeing her in his future, he preferred her to be faithful at a distance. After a few insignificant words, he could not refrain from asking her:

"Have you been ill?"

"Yes," interrupted Marie Louise. "The doctor scolded her."

"Not at all," answered the young woman. "I am quite well."

She sent her children to play at the other end of the room, but the little girl often came back to them.

With his bitter tone he put her at variance with herself:

"You refused to receive me last month in Grenoble and you come to surprise me here."

Confusedly, she murmured:

"The circumstances are not the same now."

"What circumstances?"

Having once declared herself, she was no longer shy or afraid. She did not hesitate to tell the truth. Since he was voluntarily silent, had she not to remind him of her rights as a woman, and the obligations which children impose? She thought she had opened his heart, but he had brutally shut it again. With what reserve and modesty she justified her step, and how well the

exigency of the case helped her with a proposition that she had not prepared in advance, and which her mind hit upon with the first words.

"I have come because you are free now. Then, it seemed to me that we ought to be reconciled at least outwardly, for the sake of the future of Marie Louise and Philippe, and your future too. I am always your wife. I was a very poor one before. I understood that too late. But I have suffered much. I am not reproaching you with anything. Some day perhaps I shall forget, we shall forget.— I do not know. . . . Perhaps you might take your mother's flat in the Boulevard des Adieux for the summer. Saint Martin is not far from Grenoble. You could come up and see us sometimes in the daytime. Is it impossible?"

What dignity she preserved in this humiliation which she so little deserved, and which must have cost her so much. Albert had not been entirely able to lose her from his memory except in the first months of his infidelity, and since he had seen her again in circumstances in which one's sensibility becomes more deeply impregnated with impressions, the refined and purified charm which he had found in her recurred to him too often in comparison with Anne. But a man's heart has so many complicated recesses: free, he puts from

him furiously the solution he ardently wished when he was not free. The romantic pride of his liaison and the thought of submitting for the second time to lessons of love, the antipathy which is inevitably aroused in us by the clear understanding of a reality which imposes itself like a fatal and logical order of things, made him retire with himself, and separated him from all outside influence.

"I am detained in Paris," he said after a short silence.

From the beginning of the scene she had had an intuition of her failure, but nevertheless, she suffered keenly.

"All the summer?" she implored to satisfy her conscience.

"I fear so."

He turned his head toward the children who were looking out at the neighboring chestnut blossoms, and he immediately digressed: they were, moreover, old recriminations, which he had often analyzed critically:

"Why did you prevent my helping you to educate the children? I could do only that for them and you have deprived me of it."

She replied gently:

"I had taken charge of it. You had deserted me. Have they been badly looked after?"

"I have not deserted you: you went away and you have taken our children. Do you think I did not love them as much as you? If I did not ask to take care of them, at least for a part of the year, it is only on your account, so as not to increase your loneliness and it is because my mother begged me to leave them to you. Did you not know about it? Did you not guess it? You thought that I had no interest in them? In refusing my support you gave me back my rights. Now I am free, now I mean to see them again, to share them."

He had grown more and more excited, rambling on because of the disorder of his heart and his brain.

"Marie Louise, Philippe!" called Elizabeth terrified.

The two children hurried to her; Marie Louise had already cried from afar:

"Naughty papa!"

The young wife pressed them both to her.

"For more than two years they have been mine — mine only. Dare to take them from me! I will not share them."

He stopped short, like a horse whose spirit is broken and whose gallop is suddenly brought to a standstill.

"I am unjust, Elizabeth!"

He spoke her name for the first time. In spite

of her fear, she thrilled. He fell into an armchair beside a table on which he was leaning. His anger spent itself.

"Marie Louise is right. Nobody ever wished to give more happiness than I, and I spread suffering everywhere. It is a fatality. At least I am not happy. What shall I do? How should I know it? Elizabeth, it would be better that you should leave me, forget me, start your life anew."

She pushed the children towards him, but they obeyed her unwillingly. This confession of weakness was touching on the part of a man who had always extolled the importance of will power, the spirit of continuity and energy in both general and individual life. She felt it and wanted to hold out her arms to him; a secret instinct warned her not to show her tenderness yet.

"Oh," she murmured simply, "I am not one of those who begin life anew."

She had begun it over again, however, but in the same straight path. He pulled himself together with an effort to pay her homage.

"Yes, you have already; alone, you helped my mother; you have brought up our children alone. And I, I can do nothing for you but pity you."

This word separated them still farther.

"It is not your pity that I came to seek. Your mother formerly wished to take this journey. So I have done it."

Their good-bys were distressing. He kissed his children twice. Then he wished to offer his hand to Elizabeth, who had let hers fall down at her sides.

"Later". . . said he, "some day . . . but it will be too late. Your patience has limits."

She thought: "Love has none," and said nothing, since he hesitated about her and his heart was elsewhere. Albert's last word was an "Au Revoir" which escaped him, and which she noticed. How long would she have to continue greater and greater self-sacrifice, and how long would she be kept on the brink of despair?

He had come in the morning, and in the evening she left.

In the afternoon various packages were sent to her address, containing all sorts of toys for Marie Louise and Philippe, as well as picture books chosen with care to give them some ideas of history and art. Albert had never forgotten to send New Year's presents to Grenoble, but this time he had stripped the shops and had applied himself to the task of conquering from a distance.

"It is not little Christmas," the little boy explained to his sister; "it is big Christmas."

And the little girl agreed that papa was kind. And for herself Elizabeth found in a jewel box, a ring set with a black pearl.

"Is it an engagement ring?" asked Marie Louise, who often talked about marriage to her dolls.

But Elizabeth did not answer.

IV

THE RETURN

M. Tabourin's office was in the throes of a war. Since Vitrolle, the head clerk, and the inseparable Dauras and Lestaque, had refused to acknowledge that the junior clerk Malaunay had won the bet concerning the Derize trial, the latter played all sorts of tricks on his colleagues, who retorted by tyranny and intrigue. The lawyer had waited many months before taking the case off the cause-list, limiting himself to requesting its adjournment, until the president, out of patience at hearing it called so often, had it stricken from the calendar. At the beginning of September, the chief having taken a holiday, the hostilities were redoubled. A client, who came down from Saint-Martin d'Uriage, re-established peace in a very unexpected way. He was a neighbor of the Derize estate, from which he had slyly drained off the water for his own profit.

"He has threatened me with proceedings," he explained.

"It is his right," answered Vitrolle.

The astute Malaunay interrupted:

"Who threatened you?"

"M. Albert."

Thus he was called in the country where every house had known him as a child.

"He has come back then?"

"Why to be sure!"

The reconciliation was then an accepted fact, and Albert Derize had won his case in the most decided fashion. Thus supported by a witness, young Malaunay showed his comrades insolently that he would not be the victim of their unfairness. They all felt quite ashamed and Vitrolle was their interpreter in proposing an agreement.

"We shall go up to Saint Martin on Sunday and assure ourselves of the state of affairs. If we succeed in seeing the couple together, then very well, we shall pay the bet at once in the best hotel at Uriage. Is it agreed?"

"It is agreed," said the other three, satisfied with this solution.

On the following Sunday, their first surprise consisted in finding Albert Derize on the train. Although he was beginning to grow gray, they recognized him by his distant air, the poise of his head, and that grace of movement which preserved his youth. When the car stopped he got out quickly, avoided the Casino and quickly walked up the path, which surrounds the Castle of Saint-

Ferriol. He had not even deigned to notice them.

"I certainly won this time," bridled Malaunay.

The annoyed opponents manifested incredulity, despite the evidence. They agreed to go up to Saint Martin in the afternoon in the heat, to install themselves in a meadow opposite the Derize house, and to observe. How could one fill up a Sunday in the country without some romance, and if one has an empty heart, there still remain the loves of other people to watch. The wait prolonged itself beyond all expectation. Coming from the inn, groups of peasants passed by, and one or the other, reeling, took some time to disappear.

"They have shut themselves in," stated the small clerk.

But towards six o'clock in the evening, as day was dying, Albert and Elizabeth appeared on the road, preceded by Marie Louise, who was carrying heather, and Philippe, riding astride on a stick. All denial became impossible in the face of this family picture.

"It is all right," declared Vitrolle.

And the four clerks came down across the fields to Uriage. At the Hotel du Parc, Malaunay, who had spent some time selecting his menu, ordered a sumptuous repast, for which his colleagues had to pay one-third each. Towards ten

o'clock, as they were going back to Grenoble on the last car, somewhat excited by too many drinks, to their astonishment, they found themselves face to face with Albert Derize.

" It was only a visit after all," stated Lestaque and Dauras, who regretted their money.

After his wife's trip, Albert had spent three months in Paris — the summer months — in almost complete solitude. The information he had gathered about Anne de Sézery's flight all tended toward Bladen Lodge. Without his knowledge she had been able to give up her flat, to dispose of her furniture, to accomplish all the complicated preparations for departure, and for a final departure at that: how he must have pained her by his incomplete love! The agency with which she had deposited her money had received orders to transfer it to London to Miss Pearson's address, and her mail as well. Albert crossed the Channel a second time to beg Miss Pearson for information. She would not consent to give him any definite news. Anne was not in London, he would never see her again, and that was all. She advised him to be calm, to forget and to be silent; she assured him it would be best so.

Albert came back to Paris. Must he not accept reality? Alone, he would take up the burden of days, with application. He threw him-

self into some new work with all his heart. But in the evening, exhausted, he was so depressed that he sometimes wished it were all over.

No doubt, he would never hear from Anne again. She was alive, she could live far from him and still overpower him with that abnormal, cruel uncertainty, with which he struggled as with a nightmare. But why was Elizabeth also so silent? She had contributed to this flight, she who had not been willing to leave them to their passion, but had taken time and memories for her allies. Knowing him to be free, she had come at a most untimely occasion to remind him of his duty. If he had refused to accompany her, was that a reason for him to give up their children again? He had the right to be told of their health, of their education, of their holidays. In spite of himself, in this scorching, deserted Paris, his thoughts turned to Elizabeth, and he became set on demanding his rights, and reached the conclusion that he must not allow them to be disregarded. Nothing now prevented his claiming his children for several months of the year. He would go to Grenoble, and even to Saint Martin to find them. In this way he would be able to see Elizabeth, whom he still thought only of harassing. But to annoy her was precisely the only way of seeing her again, of seeing once more her touching eyes, her frightened face, her tense

body, fragile and thin, when he had known her to be only indifferent and unresponsive. In certain more lucid hours, he reproached himself for his concern about her, as for a new impossible infidelity. But why did she not write? Had she then tired of her rôle of faithfulness?

At the end of August, exhausted by an uneasiness of mind which was unbearable to a man of decided character, he resolved to go to Dauphiné, to arrange amicably the question of the care of the children. Certain suggestions, at first put aside, later exert their influence, make their impression little by little. Elizabeth had spoken to him of settling in the Boulevard des Adieux in the vacant apartment of Mme. Derize, and of going from there to Saint Martin d'Uriage some day. Leaving Paris, where the leaves in the avenues and gardens were already turning yellow, he buried himself, as it were, at Grenoble, in the Boulevard des Adieux. Immediately he experienced that sort of distressing peace, which the tracked beast finds in his lair. The thought of his mother was strengthening. He succeeded in concentrating on the history notes which he had brought with him. The atmosphere being heavy and suffocating, he took some walks in the evening. The first was as far as the cemetery of Saint-Roch, which is nearby. Then he went to Saint-Ismier and hardly recognized the old re-

stored castle, the park of new design, the rows of trees of which a great number had been cut down to set off the view: Anne de Sézery's vow was realized; — even things had changed and lost their power of enchantment without her. There, she had first loved him. Yet that past which he awakened recalled nothing of her, but stirred up, on the contrary, other memories, as the step of a sportsman in the forest calls out game which he does not expect, and impels him to fire another shot. It was the time he met Mlle. Molay-Norrois in the streets and did not dare to bow to her. The pilgrimages turned against their own purpose. The Tower of London and Hyde Park, the allée of Mortemart and Chantilly, the quays of Paris, the Avenue de l'Observatoire which leads to the Luxembourg Garden as a river to the sea, the woods of Ville d'Avray, other corners of the great city and its suburbs, all these comprised the domain reserved for Anne. Dauphiné, although it had been her home, did not belong to her. Accustomed to understand the relation of landscape to human life, to give a soul to surroundings, he unconsciously felt the influence of his native country. It was, at every step, the return to years of struggle, to happy years, and it was the picture of a bright child of sixteen, Elizabeth, his youth. In his loneliness, he was walking towards the slope, whither his thoughts pre-

ceded him. He wished to stop, to leave again for Paris, and could not decide to do so. But why did she not write?

Unable to bear it any longer, he went up to Saint Martin d'Uriage one Sunday morning, opened the gate, crossed the orchard, rang at the door, although it was half open. He hesitated to enter his home without being announced. The old servant, hobbling along, came to receive him:

"Goodness me! M. Albert!"

"Good day, Fanchette."

He kissed the cheek, wrinkled like a russet apple, and took pleasure in it. Did she not maintain in the present, a past, which, without her, would be more distant? She explained that madame was at high mass with the children.

"I will wait," he said.

He looked on the rustic drawing-room table at the books lying about, and at the music on the piano. This examination satisfied him. Through the open windows, between the branches of the fruit trees which gravely bore their weight, he could see the huge bulk of Les Quatre Seigneurs, and farther to the right, the entrance to the Valley of Isère and the shadowy lines of the Chartreuse mountains. The horizon was bathed in that bluish mist, which comes at the beginning of autumn, to lessen the brilliant display of the summer. His heart was again reveling in the

familiarity of these things, when the servant, who had left him to see to her kitchen stove, came back into the room, her forehead clouded. She began to fuss about him, as she scratched her head. Absorbed in thought, he did not see her. At last she opened her old mouth and said:

"Monsieur Albert?"

"What is it?"

"Will Monsieur lunch here? Because I have nothing but rice and boiled beef with carrots."

He laughed at this uneasiness.

"Well, that is sufficient."

Reassured, she went back to her kitchen. After all, Monsieur had never been difficult to feed, and he was always delighted with very ordinary dishes. At the same time Albert was saying to himself, "I am not invited, and Fanchette's menu makes me hungry." The peace of the surrounding country put him into a good humor. The wait growing monotonous, he left the house and went around his estate. His farmers, good folks, but somewhat indolent, welcomed him with emotion, and invited him to have a glass of wine.

"The farm has been widowed," they assured him.

And indeed it did not take long for him to discover the neighbors' encroachments. One was planting pear trees less than two meters from the

dividing line, another was turning off the water from a spring for his own use.

"Ah, they are taking advantage of my absence!"

How would they not have abused the ignorance of a woman in the village? With his characteristic promptitude in action, he went to the encroachers and threatened them with proceedings. It was immediately known all over Saint Martin that he had come back, and that he would tolerate no trifling.

It was midday when he returned to the house. The bells of the little church were ringing out joyfully in two tones, and the sounds seemed like a release of brilliant birds flying from the old steeple. How pleasant this joyous welcome! It seemed a happy omen to him. Elizabeth had come back with the children. From the threshold of the drawing-room he saw her closing the shutters to keep out the heat. A sunbeam lit up her fair hair and her slim throat, set off by the black dress, cut low at the neck.

"Papa!" cried the children.

Although she had been told of his visit, she turned round, blushing. The bells went on ringing. This return to his house took an importance which he had not foreseen. They were both thinking of the early days of their marriage. "My work and you," he said to her then. She

had understood too late, the happiness which she had not appreciated. Quickly composing herself, she assumed a happy tone to bid him welcome. He would have preferred her to have been less at ease, and even somewhat constrained.

"Let us go in to luncheon," she said almost at once, as if she had no doubt as to his acceptance, which was the best way of surmounting the difficulty.

As the dining-room faced the south, the window could be left open without inconvenience. It looked out on the meadows and pine woods of Chamrousse. Albert was seated opposite all this verdure. Nothing predisposes one more to peace and well-being, than the simple meals one enjoys in the country, while listening to the sound of running water, and the light rustling of the branches, swayed by the wind: evidences of the harmonious life of all things. And how well Elizabeth had been able to evade the difficulties of so embarrassing a return!

In the afternoon, when he expressed his intention of going, she did not keep him back, and he was surprised. She did not even seem to listen to Marie Louise, who talked of accompanying her father to the Castle of Saint-Ferriol. She had really treated him as a guest, with the tact of a woman who knows how to receive visitors, and to hide her pleasure or her boredom: that was, at

any rate, the new impression that he took away with him. Perhaps she had tired of waiting for him, and no longer cared about a reconciliation. He was not very far from the truth. Elizabeth, in two and a half years, had accomplished such an endless series of efforts, had so eagerly desired an outcome, that she had reached that state of apparent unconcern, in which everything becomes the same to us, we need no longer reproach ourselves, nor have we any reserve strength. Now, whatever happened, might happen. She would attempt nothing more. Her failure in Paris had destroyed her moral energy which she had acquired through so much sorrow.

He returned on the following Sunday, accompanied, without his knowledge, by the whole staff of the Tabourin office. The pretext of this second visit was that he had not broached the subject of the children on the preceding Sunday, nor did he speak of it this time. Later he came several times a week.

"You are only half a papa," his daughter said to him.

"Half a papa?"

"Yes, you come in the morning and go away in the evening like the day boarders at the convent."

One day a tradesman's bill had been presented while he was there. With haste, and yet em-

barrassment, he showed such an eagerness to pay it, that Elizabeth did not protest. And this new share in her household, which was a pleasure to her, brought him a little closer to her.

Anne had been gone for four or five months. He often estimated the time, surprised to find it so short. Then he began to indulge in retrospection. Little by little he regained his former influence over Marie Louise and Philippe, for whom he invented new games and stories. The little ones, fascinated by this art of ornamenting life, neglected their mother, who was miserable about it in secret, but when does one cease to learn to love unselfishly? However, even if this childish joy did refresh him, he was too loyal and far-sighted to hide from himself any longer the fact, that it was Elizabeth who attracted him to Saint-Martin d'Uriage. He gained an understanding of her from Marie Louise's remarks, Philippe's questions, and her own words. The young woman's reserve gave way in their interviews. She showed more freely, but without display, her intelligence, circumspect, though clear and just. As he got to know her better, he manifested more eagerness to reconquer her. She neither repulsed nor encouraged him, flattered by that strange homage, which he paid her with all the resources of his mind, and proud too, of show-

ing him what she had become, which he had not divined. In her turn, she held herself aloof, and was happy in expectation, and he was sometimes irritated by this unexpected indifference, and again promised himself to conquer her and to lay down the law.

With the exception of Philippe Lagier, who was often away, he saw no one but Elizabeth. In this charm of intimacy which so few men can resist, he confided to her his entire projects, the plans of his work. One day he brought along the manuscript of a "Popular Life of Pasteur" which he was finishing for his collection of biographies. He read it aloud, and when he had finished, humbly seeking praise, she gave him the highest: that of a deep emotion, which she felt, even to the degree of silence in listening to the story of the scientific career, so honorable and so full of enthusiasm. Another time, he did not conceal his bad humor because all the Verniers in the world were already there for the day when he arrived at Saint Martin. Blanche's husband, in his vanity at being in close touch with a great man, took possession of him, and Albert, in spite of his desire to be pleasant to his wife's friends, was wearied by this attitude.

"What is the matter with you to-day?" Elizabeth asked him as he was going away.

" You are never alone."

The reproach was so droll that she burst out laughing. But he did not share her gayety. And that evening she watched him for a long time, until she could no longer see him. He did not turn around, for he gave himself up passionately to recollections of Anne, and promised himself to give up all this new life.

Two days later, he remained until after dinner, which he had never dared to do before, except on a Sunday. Elizabeth, asked to open the piano, played the " Appassionata," which had revealed to Marie Louise the attraction of melancholy. He was behind her. Music exercised a deep influence on him. In addition to his studies in history, he had always reserved a portion of his time for it, and his works bore the trace of it. At the last chord, he bent toward her, and murmured:

" Forgive me, Elizabeth."

For a man of so much pride, it was the most pathetic avowal. She stood up at once before him. Dressed in black, her face in darkness, she held herself like a flower on a long stem, which is awaiting the day. Her eyes wide open and bewildered, glowed in the dusk. The mask of unconcern discarded, he saw her again so fragile, so easy to destroy, no longer able to resist this state of uncertainty, just as she had appeared to him

at the death bed of his mother, or in Paris in the little drawing-room in the Paris Hotel. Softened, he repeated:

"Forgive me."

Her mouth twisted; and it was a contraction he had noticed at the corners of Anne's lips.

"You know quite well," she said, and he was conscious of the deepened tone of her voice, "you know quite well that I have forgiven you. I had my faults as well."

He answered very quickly, with the bitter knowledge of his cruelty, of his cowardice; but, cowardly and cruel, it would be necessary to love but once, to overcome that, and even then. . . .

"I did not know how much I loved you. You are the wife of my youth, Elizabeth. I find all my love for you intact."

"Intact?" she repeated.

And she gazed at him with large troubled eyes. Had the hour come? Trembling, ready to fall into his arms, she was waiting for one single word:

"Yes."

He wanted to draw her to him, to press her to his heart. So many bonds were being renewed; could the distance ever be bridged? Did she read to the depth of his troubled heart? She knew his desire and gently rejected it:

"No, no, Albert, not yet. Please!"

"Elizabeth, remember, I have loved you."

And in a lower voice, as if remorsefully:

"I do love you."

"If you love me, go away to-night. Do not remain here. I beg you — if you love me."

Her eyes, too intense, supplicated him, even more than her words.

"Yes, Elizabeth, I must be worthy of you."

With a heavy heart, only half free from another passion which exaltation could momentarily cloak with a film, but not suppress, he went away into the dark and starry night. From the threshold, she tried to pierce the darkness to catch the sound of his footsteps. Bewildered, trembling, with a thrill of emotion, she thought:

"Why has he gone?"

V

THE PHANTOM

Exceptional weather had prolonged the season at Uriage a little later than usual. It was the last day of September, and it might have been said that the mountains were taking pains to look their best in the autumn light. How could one decide to leave so peaceful and beautiful a horizon?

M. Molay-Norrois, enlivened by the heat, but subdued in his manner by family life, resolved to consummate a master stroke before the coming departure of the bathers. He made use of his former influence over Mme. Passerat to urge her to ask Albert and Elizabeth to come to the last formal luncheon party, that she was planning to give before her return to Grenoble. It would be the public and official recognition of the reconciliation, and by this diplomacy he would have earned his own.

Albert Derize and his wife, astonished at this joint invitation, agreed to go despite their dislike of being the cynosure of all eyes. It was proper, it was advantageous for their children that they should be seen together, and that their separation

be set aside in the eyes of the world. So they were welcomed as if they had never been the object of general curiosity. Another occurrence had replaced theirs as a subject of conversation. It was told — under the seal of secrecy — that the utilitarian Mme. de Vimelle, seeing no advantage in the new liaison of her husband, had resolved to put an obstacle in his way by threatening to start a scandal by means of Mme. Bonnard-Basson's letters, which she had intercepted.

" As you please," M. de Vimelle is said to have replied cynically. " That lady no longer interests me."

Mme. Passerat, too clever to fear the slightest personal danger, and moreover, sure of the support of her body guard, Messrs. Molay-Norrois, and Prémereux, reënforced by her own husband, believed she was well able to prevent this menagerie assembled around her table from devouring one another. And indeed nothing happened, and the Derize reconciliation was sanctioned. Elizabeth's mother, who attached great importance to social opinions, was not annoyed by the result, which helped her to bear other sorrows, which were the outcome of her husband's attractive personality. Albert made every effort to please his wife, who, in her simple dress and with her air of grace and dignity, so resembled those English portraits whose harmony he en-

joyed. All the guests profited by his conversation, in the art of which he excelled when he cared to take the trouble.

Philippe Lagier, who had been living at Uriage for a short while, exchanged clever repartee with his friend, to the great joy of Mlle. Rivière, seated beside him; she was listening to him, often looking uneasily at Albert's wife. After luncheon, while coffee was being served in the garden, the girl came up to Mme. Derize.

"Madame," she said to her, as if admiration compelled her to make this confidence, "you have never been more beautiful."

Elizabeth blushed at this sincere compliment, which, from anyone else would have been offensive to her. It was true that her face was radiant, with the clear complexion, softened by her hair which was caressed by the light, its beauty intensified by the contrast of her black dress. And her dark eyes seemed to have grown so big, especially because the cheeks were thinner. They changed the expression of her features, revealed that she was living a nobler, more active life.

"You are a child," she murmured with a smile.

"Not any more," sighed the girl, whose eyes were clouded.

She too had changed, and it was not difficult to notice it. Her coquettishness of former years

had led her to understand a deeper emotion. She had angled for Philippe Lagier as a poor girl determined to shape her own destiny by an advantageous marriage angles for a good match. In a word, he was no longer in his first youth, and she was offering him hers. Little by little she began to understand that he was exceptional, that his skepticism concealed a contempt for the commonplace, that he had a superior intellect. Thus she had done something entirely unexpected, and had fallen hopelessly in love.

Her mother, of old family, but known to be of small means, witnessed with disappointment the failure of a plan, which would have assured her about the future of her daughter. Elizabeth asked herself, not without scruples, if her intervention might possibly be efficacious.

"Come and see me," she said to Mlle. Rivière.

And the latter thanked her, as she sought her assistance with a loyal and confident look.

Just to prove the value of her friendship, Philippe Lagier came over to Mme. Derize after the girl had left her:

"Will you give me some advice, Madame?"

"At once?"

"No, not here. I shall come to your house."

"To Saint Martin?"

"Yes, after to-morrow, perhaps."

All the way up the hill she was thinking:

"what advice? I shall talk to him about Berthe Rivière." Philippe always made her a little uneasy because of the complicated, involved manner in which he expressed his ideas. She wanted to tell her husband of this overture as he was going back with her; but she dared not, either from delicacy concerning another's secret, or because she could not yet confide everything to Albert.

The next day Philippe came to St. Martin d'Uriage. She was in the orchard, in a straw chair, with some tapestry work, while her children were playing in the grass a few feet away. She was taking advantage of the last fine days and the mildness of the air to remain outdoors a good part of the afternoon. The regular sound of the fountain which was near by, kept her company without stopping the course of her thoughts. The apples and pears were ripening in the sunshine. The leaves were already changing color and the only flowers left were the colchicums in the meadows.

Marie Louise announced his presence. For how long had he been watching the young woman, whose face was framed by a large hood? She was a little offended by this indiscretion, the more so because she was hoping to see Albert, who had seemed nervous on the previous evening. So she hastened his explanation of the object of his visit:

" It is you who are to be consulted, not I."

He imagined a vague hostility, but was not offended by it. What he had to say he would express, at all costs, for he had resolved upon this course after much hesitation:

" Well, Madame, I have to make a very serious decision now. I am touched, very deeply touched by a sentiment which has been inspired by circumstances, much more than by my personality, and the continuance of which, after having astonished me, is no longer a matter of indifference to me. At my age, it is a rare favor."

" At your age? "

" I am forty. Mlle. Rivière is twenty-two or twenty-three. It is certainly a rare favor, and one which I shall perhaps not experience again if I put it aside."

" But why put it aside? " asked Elizabeth.

And, as he did not reply, and looked at her with a curious smile, she resumed:

" But why put it aside? Berthe Rivière deserves to be loved, I can assure you. The emotion of which you speak, whose power she did not at first suspect, has slowly changed her. She has seen clearly into her own consciousness. She has grown very different in two years. She is now reserved and as trustworthy as she is pretty. I should like to see her your wife."

She had become animated in her enthusiasm.

He looked at her as if he were weighing his words, and turned around suddenly.

" Yes, but my heart is not free."

She blushed while he continued, his eyes on the grass:

" Only the passion that filled it and which was hopeless is purified and has become a cult, a religion."

She made a motion to stop him.

" Let me finish, Madame. I will never speak of these things again. And it does not only apply to me. I have often asked myself if a more human feeling could not exist side by side with that one, and satisfy the promise of happiness and fidelity with which I would reciprocate. Your religion does not keep you from loving. But would that be very loyal? "

Seeing her in this peaceful frame of mind, he had, in spite of himself, changed the meaning of his explanation. Elizabeth wished to get up and send him away, that he might understand that she considered as disloyalty that indirect confession which she had been obliged to hear. She remembered that he had been the first to alter her understanding of life, and remaining seated, she forgave him for the second time. But in her reply she expressed an authority which kept him at a distance, at the same time showing him the way:

"You must know yourself. This . . . friendship must no longer occupy your attention. You will forget it by never again seeing her who inspired it."

"By never seeing her?"

"No. She will go away. Marry this young girl, who, as you just said, is not indifferent to you, whom you will love, whom you perhaps already love. But marry her without mental reservation."

"I cannot."

"Without a hidden thought. She is so young. Look at her and not at the past. Live near her and patiently form her mind. Let your life be altogether upright, without any side issues. That is the secret of happiness."

He bowed and wished to kiss her hand. She gently drew it away. She would not even allow him this humble caress. In the long silence which followed, enwrapping them as the evening mist the sloping meadows, each was indulging in personal reflections. The air was calm; Nature was motionless. Some fruit, falling from the branches, and its hard impact against the ground, made them shudder as a call of time.

She was counting all the lost years of her own happiness, the result of her former daily routine, and was seeking by what enchantment, what witch-

craft, to blot them out, to restore to her clear days, no longer troubled and cloudy. He repeated the words she had spoken:

"She will go away."

She was going to Paris with Albert. The reconciliation, which, after a long time, he no longer doubted since the previous day, was then final. In order that he might carry away a more vivid and tender impression of her, he gazed for a long time at the young woman, seated in front of her country home, surrounded by the trees in the orchard, and caressed by the peace of the country. On this autumn evening (despite a little pallor and slimness, which would soon vanish), with her big hood, her charm of youth and the bunch of grasses which Marie Louise had laid on her knees, she symbolized that picture of hope of the blossoming earth in springtime. He contrasted her with another woman whom he had seen in spring, filled with all the melancholy of autumn. It was Anne de Sézery, on the terrace of the Luxembourg Garden, at the end of April. He had accompanied her from the Avenue de l'Observatoire to Cluny in Albert's absence, and how strangely he had taken advantage of that tête-à-tête which he had sought with so much patience and cleverness. From tree to tree along the avenue he put off her confidence. In the

garden, as they followed the stone balustrade from which one can overlook the central basin and the palace, he stopped suddenly:

"I must speak to you, Mademoiselle."

She intuitively imagined something serious, something even more serious than he could say, as her question indicated:

"Has our friend asked you to do so?"

"No, no!"

She was somewhat comforted.

"Well, I am listening to you."

He began with a question:

"You are not happy. Albert is not happy."

She tried to smile.

"Is that evident?"

"Yes."

"Well, we prefer our unhappiness to other people's happiness."

"Are you sure?"

Then, with audacity, which he understood better at a distance, and which only his almost mystical passion for Elizabeth could explain, he had told her of his last conversation with Albert's mother, and of the artless plan which she had conceived of coming to claim her son from her, who must have been convinced by time of the inefficacy of her love. He could see her face fall, her golden eyes lose their fire as he spoke. But she had not protested.

"Yes, it is just that," she had said simply. "I have thought so. Albert must never know anything about it. Good-by, Monsieur. You have pained me. I shall finish my walk alone."

He had been obliged to leave her thus, despite his urgent request to go back with her, in order to palliate the suffering he had made her endure. Several times he turned around to see her again, leaning on the stone balustrade between two vases, appearing smaller and smaller, until at last what a little lost creature she seemed! Ashamed of the part he had played, he had not had the strength to meet Anne and Albert together, and, as a pretext, he said he was obliged to leave. But his talk with her had its effect. It had only hastened an event which would have occurred sooner or later, and perhaps too late. Elizabeth owed to him her husband's liberty, and the resurrection of her happiness. Yes, he had served her well. Even that generosity which she would never know, linked them together, in spite of herself. He would never forget. She would be his sorrowful secret, his Madonna, and nobody would ever know it. But would Albert entirely forget Anne de Sézery? Do not most men live with a hidden wound which reopens on bad days?

This silence could not continue. Philippe broke it with these obscure words:

"I have had news of *her.*"

She was then thinking of Mlle. de Sézery, for she questioned him, not without visible uneasiness:

"Where is she?"

"In India, at Poona. It is a kind of lay hospital, the Epiphany School, where they take care of invalids and bring up deserted children. She was not destined for an ordinary fate."

Why had she written to him? Elizabeth guessed that he was not unconnected with Anne's flight, and without ascertaining the truth of her supposition, already overcome by fear only in hearing her spoken of, she asked:

"Can you tell me what that letter contains?"

He took it out of a pocketbook and gave it to her.

"Read it and destroy it. I answered it yesterday. She will never write again."

"Have I the right?"

"Yes."

She had just taken the envelope when Albert, having gone through the house, came out into the orchard.

"I was looking for you," he said to his wife.

Seeing Philippe, his face darkened. The day before at Mme. de Passerat's luncheon party, it had been unbearable to him that Elizabeth's charm should be felt by anyone but himself, and

after trying impatiently to remain away until the following day, he could not finish his work without going to Saint Martin to see her again. He found her somewhat troubled, with the letter in her hand. Philippe, after a few words, rose and took leave of Elizabeth.

"I shall follow your advice, Madame."

He shook hands with his friend, whom he would not allow to accompany him. As soon as he had gone, Albert came over to his wife, and harshly inquired:

"What advice did he want? Am I indiscreet?"

"He was telling me about his marriage."

"With Mlle. Rivière?"

"Yes."

"Poor girl!"

"Why?"

"Because he loves you."

He did not notice how deeply this remark touched her. She stopped him reproachfully:

"Albert!"

"He confessed to me that he was devoted to you. Yes, he was the first to understand you. He realized that inner force which I had never been able to awaken. I am jealous of him, horribly jealous, not because I suspect you of ever having given him a word of encouragement — no suspicion could touch you when you were alone

and abandoned — but because I do not acknowledge that another can know you and love you more than I do now."

"Albert," she murmured distractedly.

"I ought to fall on my knees before you, and at other times I long to clasp you to my heart and blot out those years which have blighted our love."

Trembling, swayed by her exaltation, she repeated:

"Albert!"

Misunderstanding her manner, he raised his arms in despair:

"Ah! I make you afraid — I see it in your eyes. But I do not dare to touch even the tips of your fingers. Since I have returned here, even when we are side by side, there is an abyss between us which we do not know how to cross. Elizabeth, Elizabeth, I am so unhappy."

Overwhelmed, she wanted to come to him, and the letter which she had forgotten, fell to the ground. He stooped mechanically to pick it up and give it to her. Confused, she took it from his hand. He had not even seen the writing, but Elizabeth's emotion was diverted.

"Farewell!" said he brusquely, and realizing she was repressed, he hurriedly left the orchard and rushed to the road.

"Albert!" she cried, as she followed him.

Nightfall, which was coming on, hid him. A

name, which they had never dared to utter, was sufficient to separate them. Neither distance nor space could do away with the past. Anne de Sézery was always there, between them.

VI

THE CHARTREUSE OF PRÉMOL

Elizabeth waited a week for another visit from Albert after that strange scene of jealousy. Each morning, at the usual time of his arrival, she took her children to the road, as far as the beginning of the path which encircles the Château of Saint-Ferriol, and winds through the meadows to Uriage.

"Don't you see him?" she constantly asked Marie Louise, who was far-sighted.

But they had to come in to lunch without him. Anxious about his prolonged absence, she went to Grenoble. She found him in the Boulevard des Adieux, trying to work, and was surprised at the weary expression on his face. Why did he not come back? He explained to her that half separation was more cruel than complete separation, and that they must choose: either to take up their life together, or to recognize finally that that was impossible.

"Come," she said. "You will never go away again."

"Do you wish it?"

"Yes."

Next day he went up with his books and his luggage.

"A curious time for a holiday in the mountains," thought the muledriver, who brought his cases. It was already October and the last bathers had left. The old house at Saint Martin was so roomy that Elizabeth could give him a little suite on the top floor. She herself had summoned him. They lived under the same roof, they loved each other, and they could not give expression to their love. An unconquerable force held them back.

"*She* lives over there," she thought. "Does he often think of her?"

And, at the sight of her, so fragile and pale, with tender frightened eyes, he, beginning to understand all the sorrow he had made her suffer, treated her like a very delicate fiancée whom one must not frighten.

"Our first kiss will come from her," he hoped. "Had she forgotten? . . ."

But he himself had not forgotten, would doubtless never forget Anne de Sézery. Although the suddenness of her disappearance had changed his remembrance of her, she had been one of the episodes which make a lasting impression on one's deeper nature, to which men often return in thought, when searching their past for marks of

emotion. Only he had exhausted its worth. She no longer exerted any influence over him. If she had come back, she would not have regained her power, whereas Elizabeth, so well-loved before, added a charm and the attraction of the unknown to the strength of old desires and illusions. She was the living representation of his youth and a new wife as well, the finding of whom uplifted him.

Intimacy, with its thousand renewed ties, joined their lives. One day, blushing a little, she had begged him to undertake the management of her property. Thus she gave up her independence, placed herself again under her husband's protection, and restored to him the charge of the family, and, as a result of this, Albert felt more buoyant. The days went on monotonously. After work, there were long walks with the children, and in the evenings a little music, reading and plans for the future which they now made together. The season was advancing and they did not speak of leaving. With the solitude, happiness surrounded and besieged the hermitage of Saint Martin. What were they waiting, that they did not open the gates to it?

October, before it was over, gave to autumn that beauty which, in its dazzling monotony, summer never knows. The riot of color, the clearness of the air and that charm of all earthly

things then constitute a sublime manifestation of the beauty of Nature.

"Papa, you promised to take me to the Chartreuse de Prémol," said Marie Louise.

"Did I? Very well, then we will all go there."

The Chartreuse de Prémol is an old ruin hidden among the fir trees, two or three hours from Saint Martin d'Uriage. At first one follows the open plains of Chamrousse, then enters the forest. Albert arranged the little party for the following day. They would spend the entire day there — the weather was so mild — and would hire the donkey at the farm to carry Philippe astride, and a basket of provisions as well. A little village shepherd, rather simple, but very dependable, who was derisively called "Brains," would lead the animal by the bridle.

In the morning they left without haste. The children began to dispute as to who should ride, and soon both preferred to walk. They felt as though they were marching with the step of a conqueror to the end of the world. Albert hoped that the pleasure of the walk, the healthful fatigue enjoyed together, the natural blending of the light with the woods, would touch Elizabeth's heart and give him back her confidence. To shield her from the heat of the sun, she had put on that big hood, which gave her the appearance

of a very young girl. Her white neck was outlined by the low collar of her black dress. She was carrying a stick, which, no doubt, she would need on the excursion, but did not know how to use. He stopped an instant to look at her and admired that suppleness which she had acquired.

It was one of those incomparable days, of which one would like to take hold and press out the beauty, so fearful is one that they will never come again.

The road climbs across the meadows and orchards before reaching the woods.

"A golden tree," said Marie Louise, who was going on ahead as a guide.

Before them, outlined against the clear blue sky, was a pear tree, whose leaves were of a shade of yellow that was almost rose-colored, and so delicate that one might have thought they were flowers. Even in springtime, with the delicate whiteness on the branches, it could not look more beautiful.

After that came the forest, and the children were so impressed that they were silent. The slope was fairly steep, adorned with fir trees, of which some were particularly tall and stood out as individuals on this beautiful day. Among them were centenarians with gigantic tops, which, rising above the others, robbed them of their strength, air and light, and relegated them to the

shade, in which they became half weakened, knotty and stunted. Between the trees, the travelers could see the sky and the Drac mountains, whose impenetrable summits it was difficult to distinguish, because of the bluish mists of the fine autumnal weather. They heard that silvery noise of rushing water, and sometimes one of the little springs crossed the narrow mule path, the stones of which, rubbed and polished by the trucks, loaded with timber, were as glossy as hatchets.

"Is nobody here?" asked Philippe, vaguely anxious, and taking shelter behind the donkey.

"There must be somebody back there," his father promised him.

And indeed, the trunks of the fir trees, stripped of their bark, some so long and white and still uncut, others ready for transportation, gave evidence of human effort. And the little procession passed a woodman seated on one of the most beautiful tree-trunks of the forest, which he had just cut down with its neighbors.

"Good day, Claude," said Albert, who was walking last, and recognized his neighbor, Terraz. "A pity to kill such a fine tree. It needs a hundred years to grow one like that."

"There is no lack of them in the Cross of Prémol," replied the peasant. "And this will help to nourish my brood."

"How many children have you?"

"Six, Monsieur Albert. And you have only these two?"

"Yes."

"Oh, but that won't be all. At your age! With such a beautiful lady!"

And he burst out laughing with that natural simplicity which is not offensive. Elizabeth's cheeks were crimson, but she could not help smiling.

At last, after a steep climb, they arrived at the Chartreuse. Its site had been chosen with that certainty of selection of the old monks, who knew how to combine the wild beauty of a place with its almost sacred charm, inspiring meditation and uplift of the soul. From three sides, the slopes of fir trees form a circle round the clearing in the open plain. From the fourth, there is a rise of ground, and then the entrance to the valley, scarcely visible and disdainfully rejected, like the vain attractions of the world. The old structure, built in the eleventh century, was demolished during the Revolution. At first one sees only a gate restored and fitted to the façade of the forest-house, which to-day takes the place of the convent; but the mutilated ruins which the blackberries, wild plants and even the forest have overgrown, lie here and there in the broad space, like the remains of a disfigured body.

Marie Louise and Philippe, who had visited the grande Chartreuse with the Passerats, were very much disappointed. Ruins do not interest children. They want well-built houses, and the newer they are, the more fascinating to them, because it is life that appeals to them. But they consoled themselves by setting out their meal on a stone supported by wooden props, a rustic table that they had discovered under the shelter of the branches, at the end of a lawn behind the keeper's house. The latter consented to prepare an omelette for them which completed their lunch, after which he took the children, including "Brains," to visit his poultry yard and his rabbit hutch, of which he was very proud.

"Will you follow me?" said Albert to Elizabeth.

He knew the place, as he had been there in his early youth. After a few steps in the direction of the mountain, which cut them off from all habitation, she uttered a cry of surprise. Before them an intact cloister arch reared its graceful curve under the entangled dome formed by the trees, enormous larches, evergreen and symbolizing protection, and white birches with silvery leaves. The old well, because of its covering of moss and wild flowers, could scarcely be distinguished from all this mass of verdure. And too, the bare roots of stunted fir trees, which had

grown there, as in the midst of a forest, had clutched and loosened the stones. How did these stones still hold? By what miracle had time respected the purity of that arch which framed a whole portion of the forest and even a corner of sky, and stood there like a statue in a garden? The forest was already encroaching upon it and entwining it; wrapped in its embrace, it would soon disappear in the grass, and one would have to stoop to find any trace of it. Thus threatened, surrounded on all sides by a thick mass of branches and caressed by autumn in that wild landscape encircled by the mountains, it was only by its charm that it evoked the thought of man in the midst of Nature, and one knew that it was doomed.

Elizabeth looked at the arch, and Albert, a little behind, reserved all his emotion to observe her.

"I am afraid," he was thinking. "She is so delicate. She has been living for two years, almost three, with an attitude of uncertainty. How tired she must be! She needs peace. I shall know how to give it back to her. Now, yes, now, she is at one with me in my life, as we are both here. . . ."

She had turned around to him, and in the big wide-open eyes which gazed upon him he no

longer read that vaguely frightened expression which was habitual to her, but, instead, he saw fear, that fear which we experience from an immediate danger, or a vision fixed and near at hand. He quickly went to her:

"Elizabeth — what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, nothing."

He wished to take her in his arms.

"Your eyes, your dear eyes, what did they see in the woods?"

She freed herself from his embrace, and as if she had an hallucination, held out her hand to indicate to him something or someone whom he did not see.

"There, there! She is there! Look! Between us!"

"Who?"

"She is always there — when you read to me in the evening, when you tell me that you love me, when you take me out walking. Just now you wanted to show me those ruins, to exchange our impressions. She does not wish it. She has come."

"But who?" he repeated, although he already knew.

"Anne de Sézery."

At the sound of her name which neither one nor the other had ever dared to utter, the distant

girl with the golden eyes appeared actually to rise under the trees, there, near the cloister arch. Albert resolutely put away the phantom.

"Listen, Elizabeth," he said. "Nothing is between us, not even she. She has gone forever. Let us leave her. You are the wife of my youth. You have cared for our home alone so long. Do not destroy it, in your turn, for a shadow. I used to love your unawakened mind. When I believed it was so, I looked elsewhere for that happiness which we do not appreciate when it is within our grasp, and which requires such constant devotion, an almost daily watchfulness, to be realized and retained. Now I find it in you. I was not mistaken when I chose you. You are certainly the one who was to determine my life, my entire life. I love you and I beg you to forget."

She had listened to him, trembling, bending towards him, like those slender birches in the forest which rear themselves to reach the light. The last word aroused her again.

"But you, Albert, you. How could you forget her?"

"Near her, Elizabeth, I thought of you. Near you I do not think of her."

And with a curious persistence, she said:

"No, you cannot forget her. And I, I do not want to owe my happiness to her sacrifice. I have tried ever since your return. I cannot."

Surprised and dismayed by this mysterious allusion, he asked her:

"Her sacrifice? What sacrifice? I don't understand."

"That is quite right. You cannot understand."

And in the same frightened and compelling voice, she added this vague warning:

"You will understand to-night. You will choose to-night."

She would give him no other explanation. They had to go back to the forest house. They took the children and returned to Saint-Martin d'Uriage. The return was as dreary as the journey there had been gay. The children instinctively shared the sadness of their parents, who did not exchange a word. They guessed that they were again at variance. And Marie Louise, at a turn in the road, even went up to her father to ask him:

"Papa, you are not going away again?"

She received no answer. Deep in thought and absentminded, Albert did not lead the way. The day was fading. At this season, the days are so short. Below, the darkness which filled the depth of the valleys, was beginning to ascend the mountains, dispersing the rays of the sun. On coming out of the Prémol forest, the orchards and chestnut groves presented sheaf bouquets, made

up of golden or copper leaves. The procession, which had gone along without a leader, came to a short cut, and found they were lost.

"Where are we?" asked Elizabeth.

She spoke to her husband with so much ease and security that he considered it a sign of confidence in the future. She showed herself so delicately to be a woman by putting herself under his protection, and yet how well she had directed his home during the time he had deserted her! He found out easily where they were. But they were obliged to climb the hill again. Night came on as they were still on the way. The donkey, laden with the two children, went on slowly, and Philippe, who hated the darkness, wanted someone else than "Brains" to lead him.

"You are not tired?" Albert often asked his wife.

"No, no."

But she slackened her pace. Knowing that she was tired, he pitied her still more, cherishing her with that tenderness which surrounds and refreshes its object, as the sea an island. At last the procession arrived at Saint Martin, accompanied by the flocks which were being led to the pond. It was a slow trail of oxen and sheep in the twilight. The shepherds called their separate flocks. They were gathered around the water which flowed through a tree trunk. But

even this disorder was tranquil. The peace of evening was descending on the mountain-side.

Once again in the house, Albert asked Elizabeth:

"Now, will you explain to me? All along the way I have thought of nothing else."

"Presently," she said. "When the children are asleep."

VII

THE OPENED EYES

After dinner, which was a cheerful meal, despite the general weariness, she took Marie Louise and Philippe and put them to bed herself. A moment later, she came back alone to the drawing-room, where her husband, standing motionless before the fire, was anxiously awaiting her return. She held out two letters to him. She had the same expression of fear which he had noticed at the Chartreuse de Prémol.

"Read," she murmured. "When they are asleep, I shall come back."

He read first the letter Elizabeth had received from Anne de Sézery, and that revelation of a voluntary renunciation aroused in him, as a storm stirs the calm waters of a lake, all the passionate recollections which he had buried in his heart. For a moment he was crushed, possessed, carried beyond himself. What had become of her, whom he had not suspected to be capable of such a sacrifice? The second letter, addressed to Philippe Lagier, informed him. In India, at the Epiphany School, she was filling the office of Sis-

ter of Mercy, and found there the occupation of her great soul. She would never write again. With a woman's intuition, she had understood in her far-away post, her lover's resistance to his own happiness, and was letting him know of the consolation she was finding in her new life, and of the vow she had taken to make sure that her renunciation had not been in vain.

"With you, uncertainty may last for a lifetime," she said to her rival, whom she overwhelmed somewhat with her magnanimity. Albert hated uncertainty and he would have to choose before Elizabeth's return. Circumstances would not allow him to hesitate when his surging thoughts were seeking direction. In refusing to owe her reconquered place to a person whose character was still to remain a mystery; in giving him the knowledge of Mlle. de Sézery's splendid courage, even divested of the exigencies which lessened its value, did not Elizabeth reveal a greatness of soul equivalent to Anne's? With what superiority both women gave proof of their love! Ah, man, whatever he may do, is always surpassed in this, and if he wishes to be favorably judged, he must invoke the continuance of his efforts to create a lasting work, an enduring structure: passion never fills his life completely, forever.

The minutes passed. How should he welcome

Elizabeth? He could only take her in his arms and give back to her confidence and the peace of her heart. And he would even hide his wound from her. Anne, far away — Anne, lost to him — Anne idealized by her flight, would remain in his life like one of those mysterious divinities to whom one offers occult homage. Many men's hearts contain these idols, and no one divines it. It is the secret garden of each and every one. He would cultivate his secret garden as a thing apart, rather than have his wife henceforth know the least doubt, the slightest suffering.

He had arrived at this resolution when he saw Elizabeth before him. She had returned unheard. She stood waiting for the words he was going to say, her body bent by anxiety, as a stem by the weight of the flower it supports. Then he took the two letters and threw them into the flames. They watched them twist, blacken, dwindle away, and when it was all over, he drew her to him, trying to smile, so as not to alarm her.

"You see, the fire has devoured them. It is you I love."

In an indistinct voice she asked:

"And her?"

"I have so much pity for her."

"Only pity?"

"Yes."

This was the cruel grave which he gave Anne de Sézery.

But she fixed him with her questioning eyes, with her immense eyes, and this look disturbed him. He felt it pierce him like a sharp point. She had reflected too much, suffered too much, lived too much in these last years not to know his deepest thoughts. Conquered, subdued by this effort of which she bore the touching trace, the application with which by stone she had reconstructed their devastated hearth, he was afraid of lying to her, and gently taking her face between his hands to draw her to him, he said quite close to her:

"Elizabeth, do not look at me like that. Yes, this letter of Anne's has hurt me. But it is past now, I swear it. With her, whatever her love might be, we should walk towards death. With you, it is toward life."

"My Albert!"

"What a distance we have covered only to return to our starting point!"

"I am so weary!"

He rested the dear face against his shoulder.

"I am so happy here," she said with abandon.

Her sorrow, her deep sorrow had not been in vain. It had reëstablished the unity of the family in her charge. How sadly she had learned that we are much more responsible for the little

things than for the great ones in which circumstances play a large part, and that it is our duty, day by day, to strengthen the chain of our happiness, so easy to break. The future owed her compensations. She had been unable to retain the illusions of her youth. But she understood better, and he as well as she, the resisting force of human love when it is sustained by a sacred promise and the visible bond of children. With an energy which had been dormant she had accomplished the most difficult of all tasks: reconstruction. And in transforming her, that effort had made her more worthy of being loved, more developed in intelligence and charm. She had triumphed over her rival by her unswerving courage, as well as by her youth; and, freed at last, he recognized it.

"I have learned to love you," she said.

"My wife!"

This word would henceforth keep Albert's heart within bounds, and with his lips he closed the eyes that had opened little by little to an understanding of life.

THE END

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